

NEW

AGE OF DISCOVERY

Sail the seven seas and see how Europe colonised the world

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Welcome

The world is a small place. At least, it used to be. Imagine a map where the borders of Europe are detailed and defined, but the fringes of Africa and Asia are barely sketched out. They simply faded into nothingness.

As for the Americas and Australasia? Forget it.

The Age of Discovery changed all that. Europeans set out to explore the globe, encountering advanced civilisations, beautiful buildings and riches galore as they went. They shaded in their maps with new continents, and filled their treasuries with plundered wealth.

In All About History Age of Discovery, you'll meet the men responsible for colonising the globe, learn how major religions gained millions more faithful followers, and examine the profound consequences of European exploration that still resonate today.

「 FUTURE 」

AGE OF DISCOVERY

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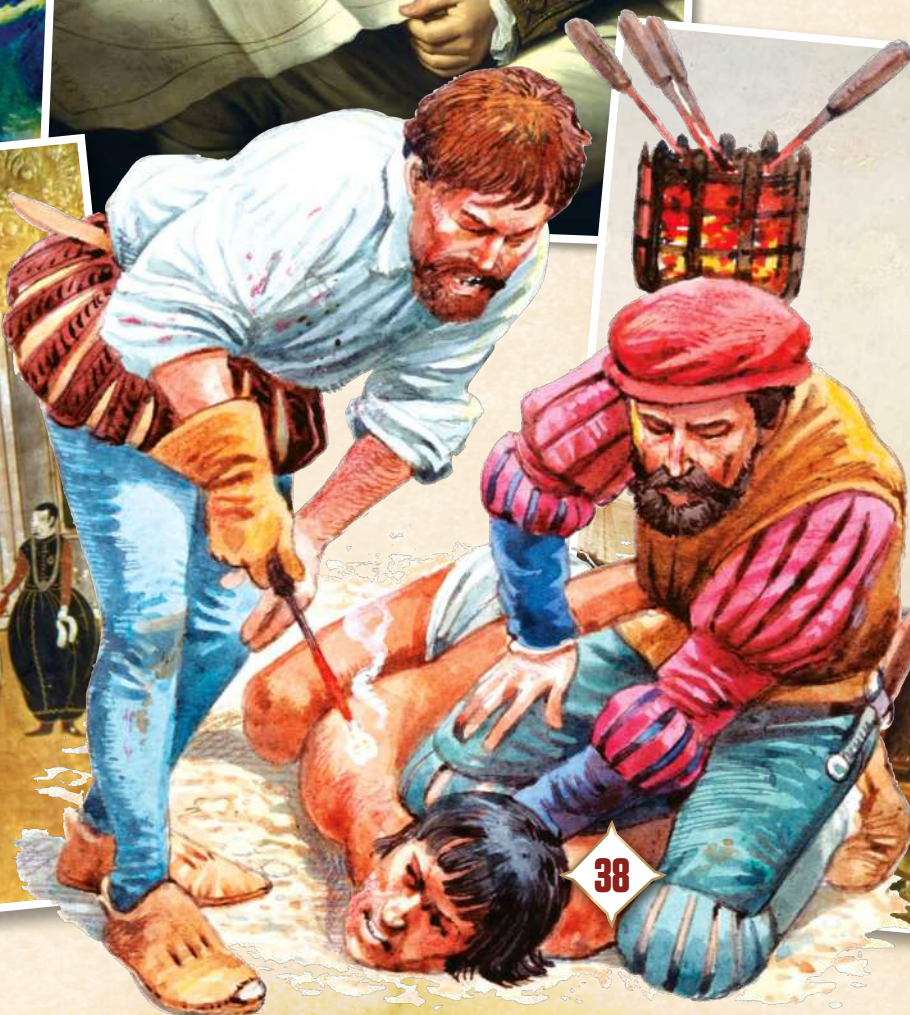
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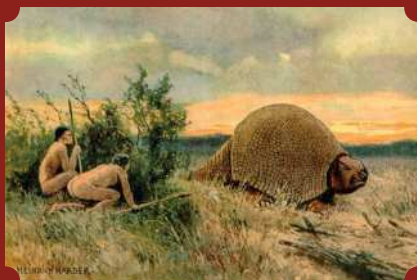
Before Columbus

Christopher Columbus was not the first person to go in search of adventure – exploration's long history stretches back to early man

— Written by Scott Reeves —

◀▶ Crossing the Ice ▶▶

c.17,000 BCE, North America



The Paleolithic hunter-gatherers who colonised the Americas would have encountered megafauna that is now extinct

Archaeologists and historians are certain that the first human migrations into North America took place from eastern Siberia into western Alaska. Hunter-gatherers then spread through North and South America, with both continents fully settled by 12,000 BCE. What they disagree about is exactly when it occurred.

Some think that the first footsteps in Alaska occurred around 19,000 years ago, during the last glacial maximum, when ice sheets sucked up the waters of the North Pacific and revealed a land bridge across the Bering Strait. The prehistoric migrants may have temporarily halted in Beringia until the vast glaciers retreated, opening up a path into the rest of North America, or they may have squeezed through a narrow ice-free corridor between the Laurentide and Cordilleran ice sheets before spreading across the uninhabited Americas.

Others believe that this was merely a successor movement to a much earlier seaborne wave of migration, possibly more than 40,000 years ago. Perhaps the migrants did not travel by foot but sailed along the kelp highway, following the rich marine forests around the coastline of the Pacific Rim by boat. This might explain why mankind seemingly spread from Alaska to the tip of South America so quickly.

It remains unclear exactly how and when humans made it to the Americas, but DNA testing, archaeological excavation and geological analysis are constantly refining our view of the pioneering Paleolithic explorers.

Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

◀▶ Reopening the route to Punt ▶▶

2750 BCE, Egypt



A depiction, likely of Hannu, from his tomb at Deir el-Bahari

An inscription dating to Egypt's 11th Dynasty records that in the eighth year of the reign of Mentuhotep III, the pharaoh despatched his chief steward on an expedition to the south. Hannu, commanding 3,000 men, left the Nile at Coptos and crossed 100 miles of the Eastern Desert along the dry river bed of Wadi Hammamat, stopping at five

oases to allow both soldiers and their beasts (probably asses) to drink fresh water and recuperate before resuming their hot, dry trek. After reaching the Red Sea at modern El Qoseir, he constructed ships and sailed south to the Land of Punt – an ancient kingdom located in Ethiopia and Somalia, or possibly the southern Arabian Peninsula.

Returning to Thebes laden with incense, precious metals and perfumes, Hannu dug 12 wells along the Wadi Hammamat and defeated rebels who refused to accept the rule of Mentuhotep III. He also found time to quarry stone from the river bed to present to the pharaoh as a contribution to his mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahari, where Hannu too would ultimately be buried. Hannu reopened a lost trade route that had lain dormant for 200 years and contributed to the golden age of the Middle Kingdom.

Image source: Wiki

Reconnaissance of Scylax

c.520 BCE, Indus Valley and Egypt

Darius the Great ruled the Achaemenid Empire at its greatest extent, but he was still eager for further conquests. Keen to know where to send his armies next, Darius sent a Greek sailor, Scylax of Caryanda, to scout the boundaries of his territory. The exact route has been lost to the ravages of history, but it seems likely that Scylax's fleet departed Peshawar and sailed east along the Kabul River before turning south, where it met the mighty Indus. Scylax tracked the Indus until it flowed into the Arabian Sea, then sailed around the Arabian Peninsula to Suez.

Scylax's report on his 30-month reconnaissance has been lost but a few scraps were quoted by later historians including Herodotus. Although some of his claims may have been a little fantastical – Scylax supposedly encountered a tribe of one-eyed people – it was accurate enough that Darius conquered the Indus basin and incorporated it into his empire as the province of Hindush. The emperor also ordered the ancient Canal of the Pharaohs that linked the Nile to the Red Sea to be cleared. With these two moves, Darius enabled Achaemenid vessels to move from the eastern fringes of Persia to Egypt and the Mediterranean, making his empire the pre-eminent maritime power of the era.

Scylax's scouting mission allowed the Achaemenid Empire to reach further east than ever before



Image source: Wiki © Darafsh Kaviyani

Pytheas also probably explored the Baltic Sea on his mammoth voyage

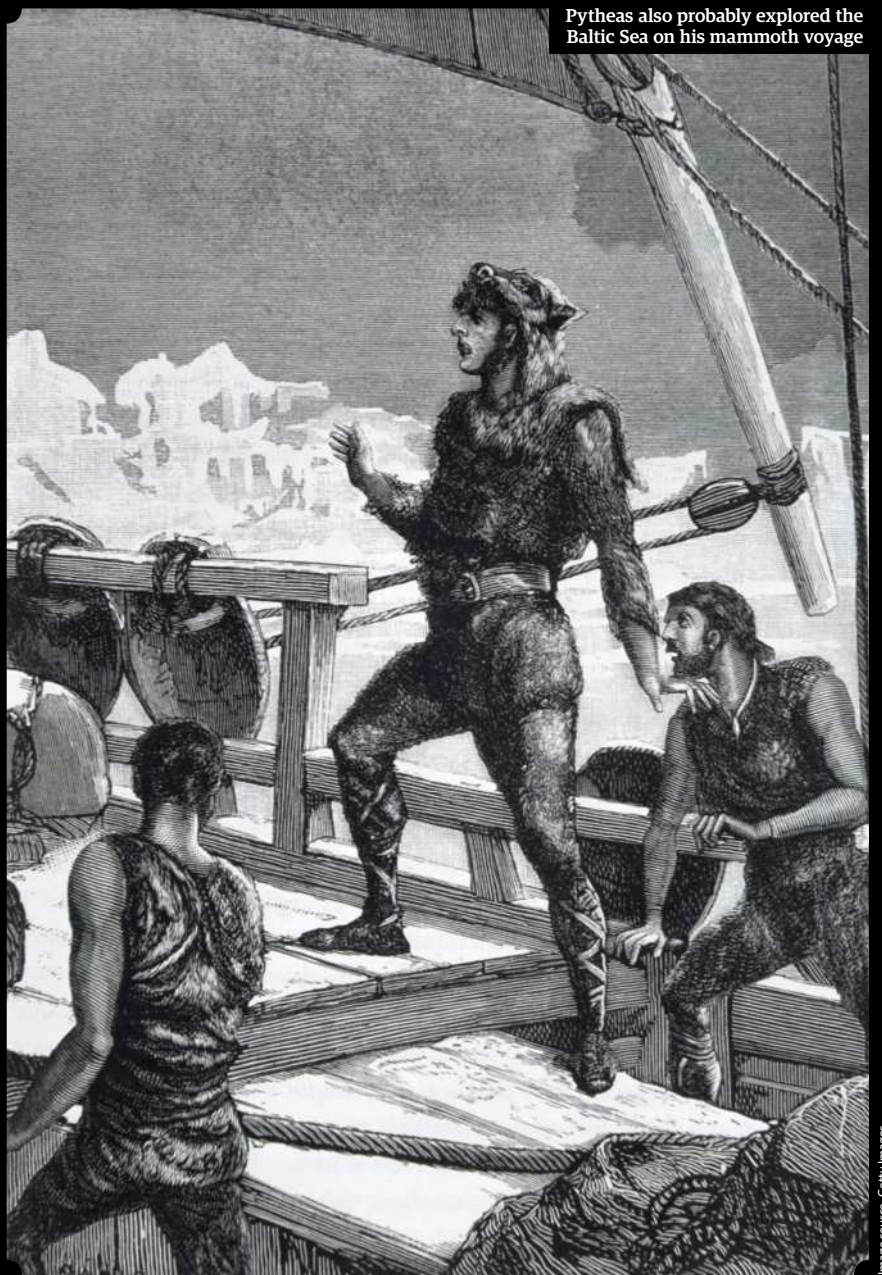


Image source: Getty Images

Pytheas's Tall Tales

c.320 BCE, Britain and the Arctic

Poor Pytheas of Massalia. This brave Greek navigator sailed all the way from his home, voyaged around the British Isles and even into the far north. But when he returned home from his six-year journey, it appears that few people believed him.

The Roman polymath Strabo summed up the mood when he described the sailor as "Pytheas, by whom many have been misled." The idea that a collection of inhabited islands lay off north-west Europe seemed ridiculous. Pytheas claimed that the inhabitants there grew crops, drank fermented grain, mined tin, used iron tools and rode in wooden chariots. He also identified another frigid island to the north – perhaps Iceland or Norway.

Perhaps his contemporaries doubted Pytheas due to his preposterous description of an area in which was neither sea nor land "but a kind of substance concreated from all these elements, resembling a sea-lung." This weird region was, according to Pytheas, impassable and the sun shone for only a few hours each day. Pytheas simply didn't understand that he was so far north that he was coming up against the sea ice of the Arctic. After all, icebergs would be an alien concept to sailors who were used to cutting through the warm waters of the Aegean and Mediterranean.

Mission of Zhang Qian

128-125 BCE, Central Asia



Zhang Qian returned to China with new breeds of horses and plants including grapes and alfalfa

Zhang Qian's expedition to the western lands did not start well. Emperor Wu hoped that this trusted military officer, accompanied by 99 men, would make contact with far-off tribes and forge an alliance against the troublesome Xiongnu. However, Zhang needed to travel through enemy territory first and was soon captured. He escaped, but only after a decade had passed.

Zhang continued on his mission undeterred but, once he made it to the land of the Yuezhi, he found himself in a settled agrarian society that had no desire to team up against the Xiongnu. Instead, Zhang spent a year documenting life in Central Asia and its surroundings, including the Parthian and Selucid empires, before setting off home. The unfortunate explorer was captured again by the Xiongnu and held for a further two years, sneaking away during infighting following the death of the Xiongnu leader. Only Zhang and his guide made it back to Chang'an (modern Xi'an) from the 100 men who had set out 13 years before.

Initially seen as a failure due to his double capture and failure to cement an alliance, Zhang's expedition was viewed more positively once the emperor and his court realised the value of the detailed information he had belatedly returned with. Subsequent trade missions meant that Zhang's were the first Chinese steps on what would become the Silk Road.

Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

Pilgrimage of Hyecho

723-726, Asia



Hyecho's pilgrimage to Buddhist holy sites saw him wander from Korea to modern Iraq

It must have taken a great deal of courage for Hyecho to set out on a pilgrimage to the Buddhist homeland, hoping to uncover the secrets of Buddha's language and culture. Pilgrimages to the places associated with Buddha were nothing new, but the Korean monk's journey was remarkable for how quickly he completed such a treacherous journey - in returning home within three or four years, Hyecho covered more ground in less time than any other early Asian pilgrim we know about.

Sailing first to China, Hyecho travelled to many Buddhist holy sites of South Asia, including Bodhgaya, where the Buddha was said to have attained enlightenment. He wandered as far west as Arabia, describing the Byzantine Empire, Persia and several central Asian states as came across them, before turning east on the Silk Road and finding his way back to northern China. Hyecho described his own observations and experiences, noting that Buddhism seemed to be in decline as Islam spread through Asia, as well as recounting local tales and legends that he heard from locals.

Hyecho's fragmentary notes and poems were only rediscovered in 1908 in a walled-up cave in the desert temple complex of Dunhuang. Since then, he has become revered as one of Buddhism's greatest explorers.

Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

“Only Zhang and his guide made it back to Chang'an from the 100 men who had set out 13 years before”

Ibn Fadlan's Diplomatic Mission

921-922, Central Russia

Among the diplomats sent by Caliph al-Muqtadir of the Abbasid Empire to Emir Elmis of Volga Bulgaria was Ahmad ibn Fadlan, a religious advisor who was tasked with explaining Islamic doctrine and law to the recently converted tribes living on the eastern bank of the Volga River. In their journey north from Baghdad around the east coast of the Caspian Sea, the Abbasid party crossed the lands of several Turkic peoples - some friendly, some less so. Ibn Fadlan recorded every step of his journey, although the largest portion of his account is reserved for the most alien society he encountered.

The people Ibn Fadlan described as the Rus - western Europeans knew them as Vikings - were tall, blond-haired and heavily tattooed Norse raiders and traders who encountered Muslims along the Volga. Ibn Fadlan was particularly intrigued by their funerary rites, describing in great and gory detail the funeral of a chieftain, a ship burial in which retainers were raped and sacrificed.

Emir Elmis was unimpressed with the letter of greeting and gifts that the diplomatic party had brought from the Caliph. He was not interested in religious instruction, but did want more money to fund a new fortress. Ibn Fadlan may have undertaken an arduous journey of 4,000km (2,500 miles) to reach him, but it appears his mission was largely in vain.



Ibn Fadlan's astonished description of a Viking ship burial emphasised the clash of cultures as Vikings and Abbasids met

Image source: Wiki / Public Domain



Saint Brendan was undoubtedly a seafarer, although the veracity of his Atlantic voyage is questioned by historians

◀— Voyage of Saint Brendan —▶

512-530, North Atlantic

The early church saw the spreading of Christianity as a priority and it was a task that Irish monk Brendan of Clonfert took to heart. In his early years as a priest he founded a number of monasteries on his journeys around Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Brittany. However, Brendan had higher aspirations and set out on a voyage into the Atlantic to search for the Garden of Eden. He and his group - numbering anywhere between 17 and 150 according to the various accounts - fasted

for 40 days on the Kerry coast, then perched in a lightweight wooden currach as the waves and wind pushed it into the ocean.

According to the surviving manuscripts that describe the voyage, the earliest of which date to 400 years after the events took place, Brendan's group encountered a number of different islands. Among them were the mythical paradise of Saint Brendan's Isle, an island that suddenly submerged and turned

out to be a sea monster or whale, and a small rock on which they found Judas Iscariot - it was his place of respite from Hell on Sundays and feast days.

Historians debate whether there is any fact behind the folklore. Many have attempted to link Saint Brendan's Isle to a geographic island; suggestions vary from a small island off the coast of Ireland to further-afield Atlantic islands including the Azores, Canaries, Faroes or Madeira.

Vikings in Vinland

1000-1002, North America

Half a millennium before Columbus, Leif Erikson became the first known European to set foot on North America (excluding Greenland, home to a Viking settlement that was actually his intended destination). Erikson was charged with introducing Christianity to Greenland by the King of Norway but was blown far off course and discovered a seemingly abundant new land. He rescued two shipwrecked Vikings and sailed to Greenland, but was determined to return to his new discovery in the west with a full expedition.

According to the Saga of Erik the Red and the Saga of the Greenlanders, Erikson's second journey to the New World over-wintered in a bay with plentiful salmon and found that the surrounding land was covered with grapevines, hence the name Vinland. Archaeologists have discovered a Viking settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows on the northern tip of Newfoundland, although this might have been a waypoint for voyagers and Leif's camp may have been further south in the Gulf of St Lawrence.

Erikson returned to Greenland laden with grapes and timber and seemingly lived off the profits for the rest of his life. Other Vikings followed in his footsteps, but their attempts to create a settlement in Vinland failed when they came into conflict with the Native Americans. Only 500 years later would European explorations in the west Atlantic resume.



Leif Erikson came from explorer heritage - his father was the founder of the first Viking settlement in Greenland

Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

Discovery of New Zealand

c.1200, Polynesia



Polynesian canoes may have looked primitive but they could handle long voyages on the Pacific Ocean

For two thousand years, small islands in the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean were gradually discovered by seafaring Polynesians whose ancestry harked back to southeast Asia. The island-hoppers settled in Tonga, Samoa, Tahiti and Hawaii, but the Polynesian migration only came to an end when the region's largest islands were spotted in the far south: New Zealand.

According to the tradition of the Maori people, the Kiwi descendants of the Polynesian explorers, the expedition that discovered New Zealand was led by two voyagers from Tahiti, Kupe and Ngahue, who sailed around 4,000km (2,500 miles) before sighting land. Although their vessels are usually described as canoes, the catamaran-style double-hulled vessels were large enough to survive the tempestuous Pacific and could even accommodate the seafarers' wives and children who came along for the journey.

Kupe and Ngahue landed at North Cape before sailing clockwise around North and South Islands, naming them Aotearoa, and stopping off occasionally to collect supplies. A local stone was taken to serve as a replacement anchor; the anchor brought from Tahiti was left behind on the beach at Porirua and can now be seen at the New Zealand Dominion Museum. Kupe and Ngahue returned to Tahiti with tales of the large, uninhabited islands to the south, but not for another century or two were attempts made to settle on them.

Image source: Getty Images

Marco Polo

1271-1295, Asia



Marco was fascinated by the wealth and mannerisms of the Chinese Empire

For a thousand years, the Silk Road was the route by which Chinese exports - particularly the silk that gave the road its name - were transported from the Far East to Europe. However, the route was actually a network of stages; goods were slowly transported along smaller sections of the route and were traded and changed hands several times along the way. Marco Polo's father and uncle wanted to try something different - to travel all the way to China and bring the goods directly back to Venice in one go. They set out on a three-year journey to Shangdu with 17-year-old Marco alongside them.

Along the way, the Polos visited Jerusalem, skirted the Hindu Kush mountains and crossed the Gobi Desert. In China, they had an audience with Kublai Khan and Marco agreed to stay in China as the emperor's messenger and spy. He spent the next 17 years travelling across the vast Yuan Empire, being particularly impressed by Khinzai (modern Hangzhou) and the Grand Canal. The Polos eventually returned home, 24 years after leaving, with a fortune in

treasures and riches. After being captured by the Genoese during a war against his Venetian homeland, Marco spent three years of captivity writing a book about his travels. The phenomenally popular tome placed Polo as Christopher Columbus's main rival as history's most famous explorer, at least in the western world.

Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

“The captain regaled his emperor with tales of a mighty whirlpool that sucked the other 199 ships to the depths”



Mansa Musa's fantastic tale of his predecessor's disappearance has intrigued historians ever since

Disappearance of Abu Bakr

1311, Atlantic Ocean

Abu Bakr II, Emperor of Mali, wanted to know whether the mighty ocean that bounded his domain to the west had land on both sides, just like the Niger River that flowed through his nation. Being the ruler of a supremely rich empire meant that he simply sent a fleet of 200 ships to explore beyond the horizon, but only one returned. The captain regaled his emperor with tales of a mighty whirlpool that sucked the other 199 ships to the depths, but the disbelieving ruler was determined to explore beyond it. He ordered 2,000 ships be prepared and set off into the unknown himself, leaving his empire in the care of a regent. The imperial expedition was never seen again.

The manner of Abu Bakr's brave but foolhardy death is recorded in the words of his regent and successor, Mansa Musa, who told the story to his Egyptian hosts while returning from Hajj. Fanciful theories propose that Abu Bakr made it safely to the Americas, although the bulk of historians consider the evidence behind such claims to be flimsy. More likely, the ruler of the world's wealthiest empire never discovered that the Atlantic Ocean did indeed have land on its far side.

Adventures of Ibn Battuta

1325-1354, Africa and Asia

Born in Tangier, Morocco, Battuta's 29-year odyssey around the known world began when he determined to leave his homeland to complete the Hajj. Beginning alone on a donkey before linking up with a caravan, Battuta's journey across North Africa saw him pause at Tunis, Alexandria, Cairo, Damascus and Jerusalem before completing the pilgrimage to Mecca 18 months after setting off.

Bitten by the travel bug, Battuta then set off on a number of increasingly exotic expeditions: first across Iraq and Persia, then to the southern Arabian Peninsula and the east coast of Africa, after that to Anatolia, Constantinople and India. After a sojourn in Delhi for a few years, where he worked as a judge, Battuta's itchy feet returned and he sailed through the Strait of Malacca to China. The well-travelled Moroccan was granted an audience with Toghon Temür, the last Mongol emperor of China, before deciding it was finally time to head home.

Battuta was almost within reach of Morocco when he heard that his parents had died during his long absence, so he decided to continue on his travels. After a brief crossing of the Mediterranean to Muslim-controlled Spain, Battuta turned south and into the heart of Africa before finally returning to his homeland to dictate his memoirs. His wanderlust finally satisfied, Battuta remained at home having covered around 120,000km (75,000 miles) and 44 modern-day countries on his adventures through the Muslim world and beyond.

During Battuta's travels he was attacked by bandits, almost drowned and threatened with beheading



Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

The Starting Point

There's a World Out There

How the Age of Discovery began

Written by Edoardo Albert

In the early 15th century, Portugal was a poor country stuck out on the edge of the world, hundreds of miles away from anything. The Mediterranean remained what its Latin name proclaimed it to be: the centre of the world. The Italian maritime republics, Venice and Genoa, had monopolies over the vastly lucrative trade with the East. It was income from this trade that allowed the Venetians to build a city of marvels floating upon the water, an image of the source of their wealth. All the Portuguese had was the ocean, the endless 'world ocean' that, according to the geographer Ptolemy, enclosed all the lands of the world, possibly continuing without end.

What made things worse for Portugal's hopes of becoming part of this lucrative trade was that, according to Ptolemy, the Indian Ocean, the

fabled sea that produced most of the high-value goods of the world, was landlocked. The most eminent authority of antiquity averred that the Portuguese might sail to the ends of the world, and still never gain access to the ports trading pepper and gold and silk. They were stuck forever with only ocean as their western boundary. But through a concerted, generation-spanning effort that required the whole-hearted support of the Portuguese crown, this small, poor nation - so poor that at the start of the great enterprise the King of Portugal was too poor to mint gold coins - fundamentally changed the nature of the world, giving birth to the global, interconnected world in which we live today.

To achieve this the Portuguese made use of a number of discoveries; some indigenous, others borrowed. Fundamental among these were compasses, imported from China via Arab

A caravel, the revolutionary Portuguese ship design that opened up the oceans to European explorers

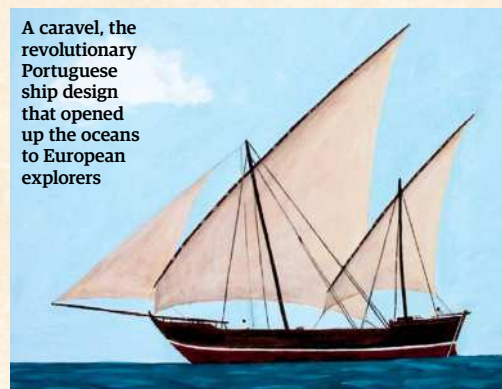
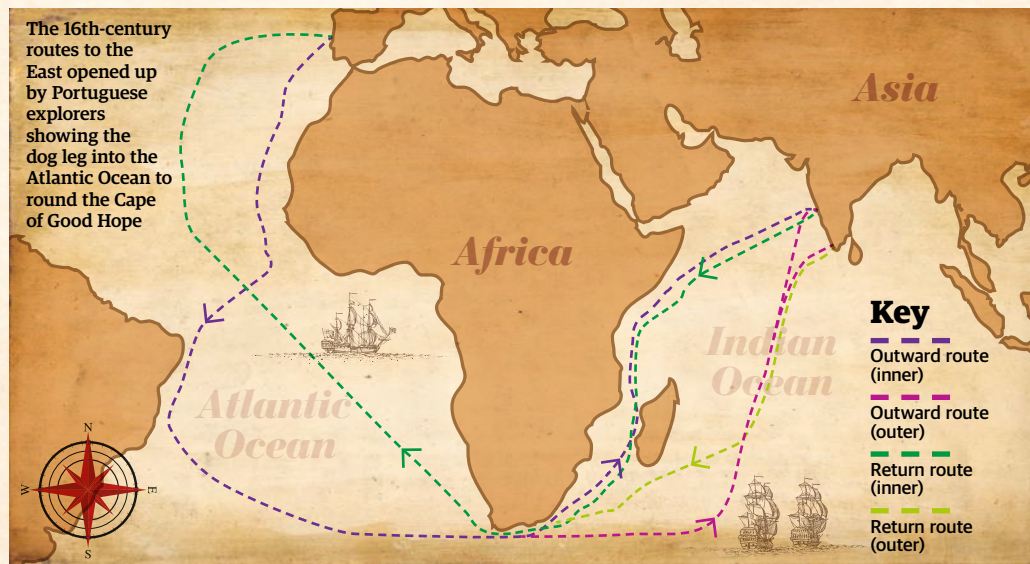


Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

traders, and the caravel, developed in Portugal, the revolutionary ship design that opened up the Atlantic Ocean to Portuguese explorers by allowing sailors to sail windward by beating - tacking backwards and forwards at an angle to the prevailing oncoming wind. Caravels were fast and manoeuvrable, with triangular lateen sails allowing them to sail windward while the square-rigged sails gave them speed before the wind.

Prince Henry the Navigator was the Portuguese prince who first coordinated Portuguese efforts to explore down the west coast of Africa. Henry hoped both to find a route to the Indian Ocean and to make contact with the legendary Prester John, who was said to rule a great Christian kingdom in the east. The Portuguese had fought a centuries-long struggle to reclaim their land from Muslim invaders. Now Henry aimed to outflank the Muslim world, claim its lucrative Indian Ocean spice trade and make an alliance with Prester John. To that end, Henry sponsored a succession of voyages down the coast of Africa, each marking a new southerly furthest point before returning with geographical and navigational information for other navigators



The World According to Ptolemy

At the start of the Age of Discovery, the world map looked very different

The centre of the world

As a geographer of the Roman Empire, Ptolemy's depiction of the Mediterranean - Mare Nostrum or 'Our Sea' in Latin - and its rivers and coasts was generally accurate.

The encircling ocean

To the geographers of the classical world, brought up within the confines of the Mediterranean, the ocean beyond Portugal was boundless. Travel on it was both extremely dangerous and futile, as it led nowhere.

Africa

When the Portuguese began their expeditions, there was simply no idea of how far Africa went. But Portuguese explorers proved that the Indian Ocean connected to the Atlantic.

The landlocked ocean

According to Ptolemy, the Indian Ocean was landlocked, like the Mediterranean. For countries on the Atlantic fringe of Europe, that meant there was no possible sea route to the east.

and for the geographers who were assembling in Lisbon. Previously overlooked, in the course of the 15th century Lisbon became a crucial nexus for geographical information, where news and discoveries were shared - as well as being jealously guarded from other powers. By the time of Henry's death, the Portuguese had explored south as far as present-day Sierra Leone, as well as discovering Madeira and the Azores, previously unknown islands lying in the great ocean. The Portuguese were beginning to outstrip Ptolemy in knowledge.

The final steps to opening up the world took place under the rule of John II. For the Portuguese, John would pass into history as the Perfect Prince. Even his rivals acknowledged his natural majesty: Isabella, Queen of Castile and then of the united monarchies of Castile and Aragon, simply referred to John as 'El Hombre', or 'The Man'. During his reign, John sponsored the naval expeditions that would finally solve the great navigational conundrum that had stopped the Portuguese advancing further south down the coast of Africa.

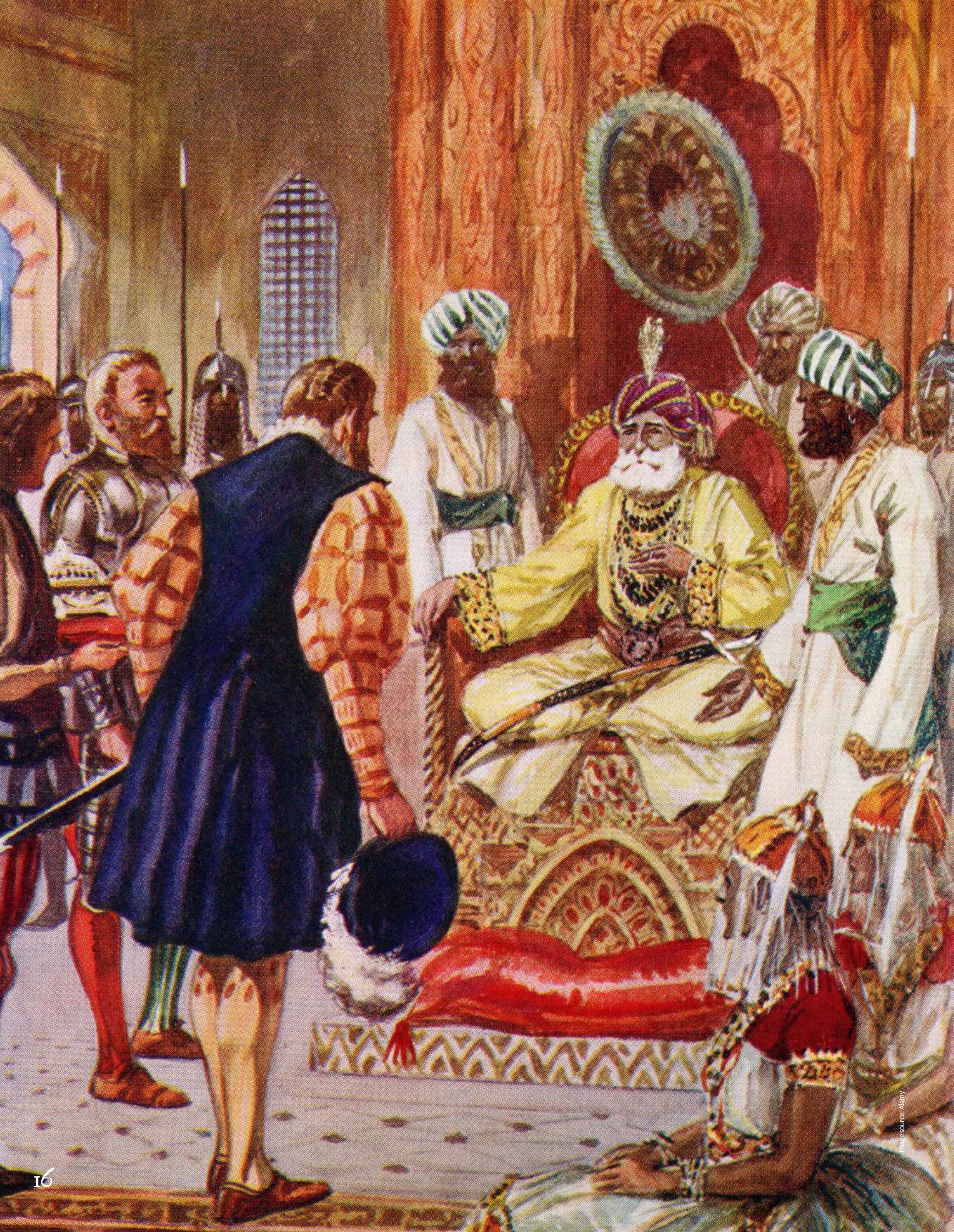
The problem was the wind. In the Gulf of Guinea, that great bite into the side of Africa, the winds became unreliable and often died away to calm. Exploration by coast hopping became stifled. To get further south required better, steadier, stronger winds. These winds were available out in the ocean, so rather than inch down the coast,

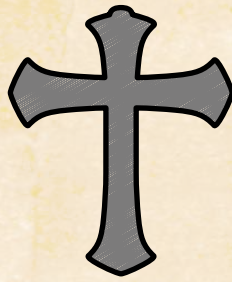
Portuguese navigators furled their sails, set their compasses and, having reached as far south as Guinea, headed out into the open ocean.

In caravels measuring between 12 and 18 metres, they sailed for days or sometimes weeks across empty ocean, first southwest, then due south, until reaching the lower latitudes they steered east again. Thus did Bartolomeu Dias eventually reach and pass the Cape of Good Hope in 1488, opening up the Indian Ocean and definitively proving Ptolemy's geography wrong. But also, and still unknown to these first navigators, the southwest course was bringing them towards a continent previously completely unknown in the Old World: the Americas. Christopher Columbus, selling his services to the rival crown in Castile but employing a Portuguese navigator, attempted to use this new navigational technique to find a westward route to the east. But instead he found a New World. The Age of Discovery had well and truly begun.



'El Hombre': King John II of Portugal, the monarch most responsible for launching the Age of Discovery





Sugar and spice

The Portuguese Empire

Rising from small beginnings and built on ingenuity, Portugal was the envy of the early modern world, leading to rivalries that fuelled its decline

— Written by June Woolerton —

As the year 1890 got underway, Portugal was given an ultimatum. For centuries, Britain, along with France and the Netherlands, had been attempting to erode what remained of Portuguese imperial power. Now, as the 19th century entered its final decade, the British Ultimatum demanded that Lisbon give up its plans to link two of its remaining colonies, Angola and Mozambique, on land that London claimed as its own. This diplomatic skirmish would lead to major social and political change in Portugal and prove to be the fatal blow to an empire that had once been hailed as the greatest global power of them all.

The pressure was nothing new. From the 17th century onwards, Portugal had found the many different parts of its imperial holdings under attack from European rivals who wanted a share of the wealth and power it had won itself through its dominions, which spread through Africa, Asia, the Pacific and the Americas. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, its power began to decline and fragment as the Dutch and British encroached on Portuguese postings around India as they sought to grab a bigger share of the lucrative trade routes there. Lisbon, which had once led the world in

conquest, was reluctantly turning into a bit-part player on the global stage.

But then Portugal had been very far from a major power when it first began to expand beyond its borders in the early 15th century. In August 1415, the ambitious King John I and three of his sons led a raid on Ceuta on the very tip of northern Africa. It was an important trading post and of huge strategic importance as it sat facing Europe. Once Ceuta was captured, the royal regime struggled briefly to know what to do with it, but it soon became a starting point for exploration along the African coast with John's son, Henry, leading the push for discovery. He, like others, wanted to expand his horizons, but as a leading member of the ruling House, he also knew that Portugal needed and wanted better trade to improve its standing in the world.

The main impetus for this expansion was a desire to tap into lucrative businesses like spice and sugar, which were reaping benefits for other European powers who bought and sold along trade routes through the Middle East. Portugal needed another entry into this world of riches and found it in 1434 when one of Henry's sailors, Gil Eanes, successfully navigated the mysterious Cape Bojador on the west coast of Africa, a first

for a European. His boss, known as Henry the Navigator, was also influential in the development of new technologies, including the faster and lighter ships called caravels, and suddenly a new world of discovery opened up.

Expeditions began to flood out of Portugal, pushing further and further south along the African coast and establishing settlements as they went. They also headed west and by 1462, the Cape Verde Islands off the African coast had been found and settled. They became a major post in the transatlantic slave trade.

Around the same time, an earlier conquest, Madeira, started to take a big chunk of the lucrative sugar trade while another holding, the Azores in the mid-Atlantic, brought in profits through wheat production. By the time Bartolomeu Dias rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1488, opening up the possibility of trade with Asia, Portugal had established a complex network of forts and trading posts along the African coast, which became bases for trade in everything from gold to humans.

But what Portugal really wanted was a base in the Indies. When Christopher Columbus came back from his 1492 voyage of discovery for the Spanish monarchs, the Portuguese king became



18th-century Portuguese tile art depicting the capture of Ceuta in Morocco in 1415

convinced his neighbours would steal his thunder. The 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas carved up the world outside Europe between Portugal and Spain along an imaginary line set 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands. And within a few years, the Portuguese were speeding southwards again to try and beat their rivals to India.

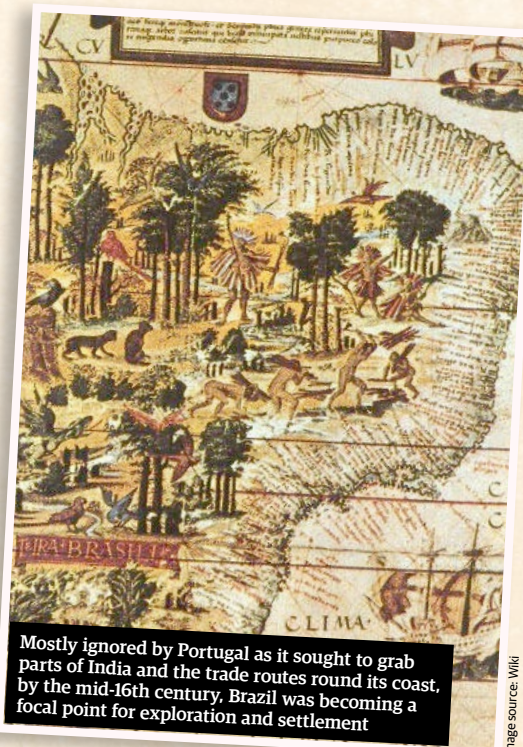
Vasco da Gama set sail in the *São Gabriel* on 8 July 1497, and as the year came to an end, rounded the Cape of Good Hope. On 20 May 1498, da Gama stepped ashore in Calicut in Kerala, becoming the first European to sail to India. His achievement brought him great personal glory, but it also began the most successful years of the Portuguese Empire as the long-desired trade routes with India finally became reality. Over the next few years, ports were established throughout the country and trade in goods like pepper and cinnamon thrived.

Meanwhile, Pedro Álvares Cabral had sailed his Portuguese fleet to the east coast of South America, arriving there in 1500. The land he found was filled with a wood the conquerors called pau-brasil and soon the commodity had given its name to their new holding. Portugal, the little kingdom

that had first looked to expand less than a century earlier, was now in control of a huge network of trade routes linking the extensive holdings that now made up its empire. In 1502, the new imperial power created the *cartaz*, a licensing system aimed at protecting ships from rivals and pirates.

By then, Portugal's interest in expansion had gone beyond trade and money. Even its earliest foray into foreign waters had held other, lesser, motivations but now these became increasingly important as it flexed its muscles on the world stage. The spread of Christianity became more of a focal point, as did opposition to other faiths, including Islam. Portugal also looked to colonise larger and larger areas and impose its own administration on them. All this came together as it sought to secure its place in India.

Alfonso de Albuquerque had helped to conquer the entrance to the Red Sea for Portugal in 1506 and set about trying to close off the Indian Ocean to preserve his country's monopoly there. That brought him into conflict with the Ottoman Empire, leading to a series of wars that would see him score some famous victories. Within two years



Mostly ignored by Portugal as it sought to grab parts of India and the trade routes round its coast, by the mid-16th century, Brazil was becoming a focal point for exploration and settlement



This image depicts 4 of the most famous Portuguese explorers: Vasco da Gama, Alfonso de Albuquerque, Nona da Cunha and Pedro Mascarenhas

“The main impetus for this expansion was a desire to tap into lucrative businesses”

1755 earthquake and tsunami, which claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, weakened its centralised power. The rise of Napoleon in the early 1800s damaged Portugal further and by the middle of the 19th century, Brazil had declared independence, and as a result, Lisbon focused its imperial efforts on Africa.

In an attempt to re-establish its pre-eminence on the world stage, Portugal began to work towards forming larger colonies in Africa. Its Pink Map of the 1880s sought to link its holdings and create a swathe of empire across the centre of the continent. But the central government was in no position to press on in the face of opposition. The British Ultimatum of 1890 effectively ended colonial expansion and in the 20th century, independence movements unravelled what little remained of Portugal's imperial power.

Portugal was ultimately powerless to stop the march towards independence. Goa, the jewel in the emperor's crown, was taken by India in the 1960s, with Benin also breaking free. The remaining African holdings were decolonised as Antonio Salazar's Estado Novo regime wobbled and fell. The last overseas possession, Macau, was returned to China in 1999, bringing to an anticlimactic end an empire acknowledged as one of the first global powers.

of his appointment in 1509 as Portuguese viceroy in India, Albuquerque had captured Goa and Malacca for his country and set up expeditions to explore Indonesia. Timor was discovered in 1512. Soon afterwards, the first Portuguese forays into China took place, although they soon descended into chaos, leading to the killing of explorers and a retreat. However, the empire became the first European power to set up trade routes with both China and Japan as its influence grew even further over the following years.

French threats to Brazil spurred a new wave of settlement there with towns springing up throughout the 1530s as Portugal sought to consolidate its position. For a period in the early 16th century, the Portuguese Empire seemed all but invincible. It conquered new territories in the Persian Gulf and across India, and claimed the Moluccas Islands after a series of battles with its main imperial rival, Spain. By the middle of the 16th century, Portugal controlled trade routes between Europe and Asia and within areas including India and large parts of Africa.

The empire made the kings of Portugal very rich, but as the 16th century wore on, it also made them vulnerable. When the throne fell vacant in 1580, Philip II of Spain swept in to claim it. He had a birthright to the crown, but he also had enough power to see off his rivals. Following his confirmation as king of Portugal in 1581, he created a personal union of his new realm's empire with the Spanish imperial power. His latest kingdom retained autonomy over many aspects of its administration and it also benefitted from being able to access Spanish trade routes. But it also became a target for Spain's enemies. In the same year, part of Philip's Dutch lands finally won the independence they had long been seeking and merchants began to set their sights on the imperial

prizes that had brought so much wealth to the continent over the previous two centuries.

By the time the union with Spain ended in 1640, Portugal's position had weakened. The Dutch push for trade routes in Asia and India had erupted into war in 1602, while the English were also encroaching on imperial holdings. However, at the end of the 17th century, the discovery of gold in Brazil brought new wealth to the empire, with the crown in Lisbon claiming 20 per cent of everything found. But as Brazil boomed, its inhabitants' minds turned to independence. And a series of disasters in Lisbon, including the



By the 18th century, the Dutch were used to sailing their ships into Portuguese waters and ports as the imperial power faced challenges from its European neighbours



Cunning and clever, daring and determined, Hernán Cortés cut a swathe through Central America and became an inspiration to many later conquistadores



Colonising America

The Spanish Empire

A thirst for new worlds led to an empire with riches and power on a global scale that declined as dramatically as it had grown

— Written by June Woolerton —

It stretched from Asia to the Americas and entrenched its roots so deeply that more than a century after it officially came to an end, its influence continues to be felt. The Spanish Empire was one of the greatest global powers ever seen, bringing untold wealth to its rulers and unimaginable grievances to some of those whose lands were conquered in its fast-moving and ambitious expansion. It left a legacy of language, religion and culture in lands thousands of miles from its heart and yet its size became its enemy and led, in part, to its disintegration.

Spain's empire exploded onto the world stage in a fit of violent conquest that dominated the politics of the 16th century. The crowns of Aragon and Castile had only just been united through the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella when the Genoese explorer Christopher Columbus arrived at their court, hoping to finally win backing for his plans to sail for Asia. The king and queen, fresh from the successes of their Reconquista, which had seen them drive the final Muslim populations from Spain, poured cash into the project that would change the world forever. Their faith was soon rewarded. On 12 October 1492, Columbus caught sight of a land he named 'San Salvador' and within weeks, an imperial power had begun to take shape.

Columbus returned to Europe in early 1493, still believing he had landed in part of Asia. Forced to stop in Portugal on his way back to Spain, he described his discoveries to the country's king, John II, who was ambitious to expand his own holdings around India. Furious and fearful that his attempts to conquer new lands for Portugal would be damaged, John began negotiations with Ferdinand and Isabella leading to the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494, which divided freshly found territories outside Europe along an imaginary line. While almost impossible to enforce, this barrier, which gradually nudged to around the midway point of modern South America, would end up shaping the Spanish Empire for centuries to come.

The excitement caused by Columbus' return to Spain led to a rush of expeditions in the following decades, although it wasn't until Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci joined the push westwards that it was discovered this ever-growing fleet of ships and conquerors were in fact heading to a 'New World', separate from Asia.

Vespucci proved the lands targeted by Spanish sailors weren't part of the Indies Columbus had dreamed of reaching, but instead a completely different land mass that would take a form of his first name, America. Soon afterwards, Vasco Núñez de Balboa charged across the central part of this newly found continent to become the first European to see the Pacific. He claimed the ocean for his king, Ferdinand II, and this, along with the establishment of control over most of the Caribbean islands occurring at the same time, provided Spain with a power base for even more ambitious conquests.

The ancient empires of the newly found Americas began to tumble to the ambitious new imperial power.

The Spanish were lured in part by their continuing desire to explore, but also by the promise of wealth. As they became aware of the abundance of gold and precious metals in the lands that lay before them, the Spanish conquerors became more daring and more determined.

In 1519, Hernán Cortés took command of an expedition to



At its height,
the Spanish Empire
covered 13.7 million
square kilometres –
that's over 10% of the
world's land

the Aztec Empire in Mexico. Partly with the help Malinalli, one of the local women given to him as an offering on his arrival in Mexico who became his interpreter and then lover, Cortés began to cut into the Aztec power base. Within a year, the Aztec emperor Montezuma II was a Spanish puppet. His death in 1520 was followed by a swift conquest aided by the Tlaxcala, longtime foes of the Aztecs, who helped Cortés win complete control of the wealthy lands by 1521.

A decade later, Francisco Pizarro led a difficult foray into Peru and the land of the Incas, and following the pattern set by Cortés, looked to turn its ruler, Atahualpa, into a powerless frontman while he ruled in his place. Following a gruesome massacre at Cajamarca in 1532, the Incan emperor was held hostage, but he promised his captors a room filled with gold as a ransom. Over 30 tons of precious metals were produced before the Spanish decided to execute him anyway. By 1533, Peru was completely subjugated and became the base from which large parts of South America would come under total Spanish control.

The speed of the conquest took Spain's European counterparts by surprise, but it was less shocking to those involved. Columbus had noted of his first meetings with the inhabitants of San Salvador that "I could conquer the whole of them with 50 men, and govern them as I pleased". While they were vastly outnumbered wherever they landed, the Spanish brought with them the advantages of horsepower and weaponry far more powerful and sophisticated than anything their opponents had ever seen. They also brought Western germs and as diseases like smallpox took

hold in the Americas, populations were devastated within weeks, further weakening their resistance to conquest.

At its height, the Sun was always shining on part of Spain's imperial holdings. The South American bases along the Pacific allowed explorers like Ferdinand Magellan to sail into more uncharted territories, and by the mid 16th century, the Philippines belonged to Spain, too. The islands joined a growing list of areas under Spanish power with the empire eventually covering all of the Caribbean, South and Central America, as well as chunks of North America, areas in Africa including Equatorial Guinea and South Pacific islands such as Palau.

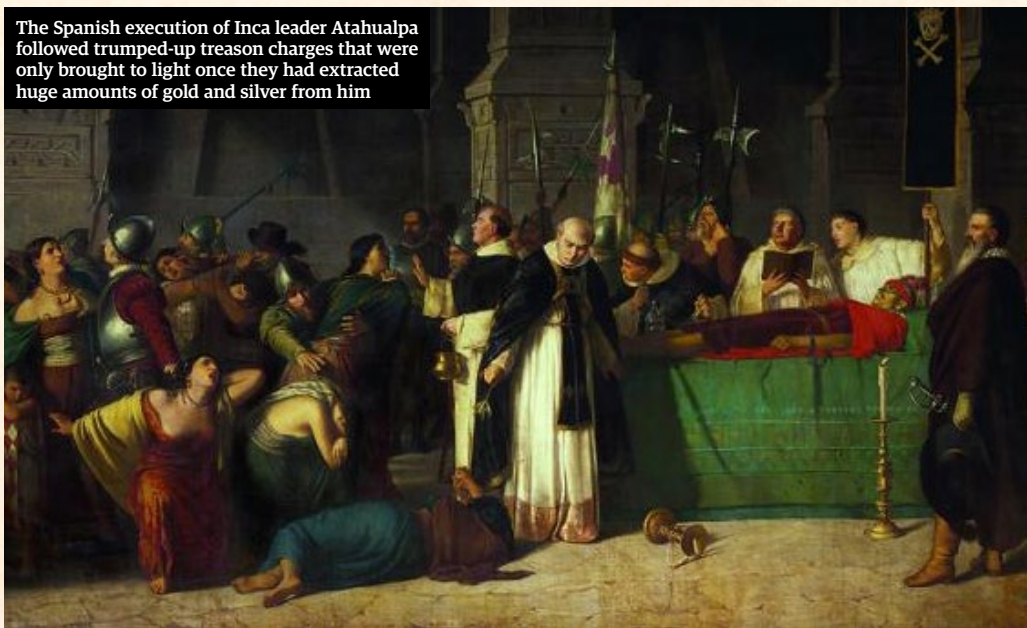
The imperial holdings were divided into vice royalties. Following the rapid expansion of the 16th century, the Vice Royalty of New Spain ruled from Florida and California in the north, to the Caribbean

in the west and as far as Venezuela in the south. The Vice Royalty of New Peru took control of all the other South American holdings. Always under the auspices of the crown, these vice royalties were impressive power bases as well as providing extensive wealth for those who were able to rise to high positions within them.

The riches the new empire brought with it were also shared back in Spain. As the economy boomed, Spain's rulers built themselves some of the most impressive regal residences in Europe. They also gave their backing to the arts and literature in their country, with a surge in ambition and achievement that would become known as El Siglo de Oro, or the Golden Age. Authors Miguel de Cervantes and Lope de Vega, artists Diego Velázquez and El Greco and composers including

"At its height, the Sun was always shining on part of Spain's imperial holdings"

The Spanish execution of Inca leader Atahualpa followed trumped-up treason charges that were only brought to light once they had extracted huge amounts of gold and silver from him



The empire builder

Charles V became ruler of much of Europe through birth and oversaw an empire that made him the envy of the world



Charles V ruled an empire covering over 1.5 million square miles

In a quiet monastery, an exhausted man spent his last years in a room lined with clocks. This subdued life belied an incredible past. For the man was Charles V, once emperor of the first realm on which the Sun never set.

Charles, born in Ghent in 1500, had inherited most of Europe by the time he turned 25. Through his Habsburg father, Philip the Handsome, he succeeded to the Netherlands and the Duchy of Burgundy while his paternal grandfather, Maximilian, left him the Holy Roman Empire. Through his mother, Joanna, he claimed the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon and with them, the already burgeoning Spanish Empire.

Such a huge power base needed vast resources and the imperial holdings provided cash for Charles. It came at a price. In 1518, he authorised the first direct shipment of slaves from Africa to the Americas, changing the nature of the trade forever and brutalising it further.

By the time he was 50, Charles was exhausted. He abdicated his power, leaving his Holy Roman Empire to his nephew and his Spanish imperial holdings to his son, who became Philip II. He retired to the monastery of Yuste in Extremadura, but kept in touch with government via letter.



Pizarro's subjugation of Peru led to the rapid conquest of much of South America and the establishment of Spain's vast empire



Philip II of Spain also became king of Portugal, expanding, on paper at least, the reach of his imperial power around the world

Tomás Luis de Victoria all flourished during this period, while the country's navy and army became forces to be reckoned with.

The emergence of Spain as a military and cultural power reached its apogee as the Habsburgs took control. Charles V became king of Spain in 1516, not long after inheriting power in the Netherlands, and just three years before succeeding as Holy Roman emperor. Much of

modern-day Europe came under his rule and the wealth he obtained from his empire allowed him to finance fightbacks against rebellions. His son, Philip II, didn't inherit the Holy Roman Empire, which passed to another wing of the family, but he augmented his own power by grabbing the throne of Portugal in 1581 during a succession crisis.

By then, the power of Spain was beginning to weaken. Philip II had run into difficulties trying to keep control of the Spanish Netherlands and costly battles followed. Bankruptcies took their toll on government while the War of Spanish Succession, which saw both France and Austria try to take control of Madrid and its empire in the early 18th century, caused more instability. Spain's global domination had come under threat from French and British expansion as trade routes across the Pacific and Atlantic became more important in bolstering national wealth across Europe.

There was also more opposition to the power and wealth the empire had brought to religious orders, including the Jesuits. In the early years,

spiritual conquest had been almost as important as territorial gain. But the missionaries had become administrators, too. The Jesuits were expelled from the Spanish Vice Royalities in 1767, but their departure removed a level of government, so some areas began to loosen their links to imperial control.

In the early 19th century, independence movements sprang up across South and Central America, and under the determined and charismatic leadership of Simón Bolívar, large swathes of the continent broke free from Spain. Madrid had been powerless to stop the calls for freedom after Napoleon invaded and a period of instability, marked by abdications and dynastic warfare, created the perfect vacuum for the empire to drift away. By the time royal power was properly re-established under King Alfonso XII in 1874, most of Spain's holdings were gone. The last holdings in the Americas, Cuba and Puerto Rico, were lost in 1898, while the Philippines were lost the following year.



A depiction of Christopher Columbus aboard the Santa Maria in 1492





AMERICAS

The concept of land across the Atlantic had mystified those in the Eastern Hemisphere.

Was it there? Or would you simply hit Asia? Christopher Columbus accidentally managed to find out...

Coming to America

No one person 'discovered' the New World. Rather, it was settled in migratory waves, often leading to violent clashes

The First Americans

During the last ice age, a large group of hunter-gatherers from North East Asia crossed a land bridge on the Bering Strait and arrived in North America for the very first time.



There were at least two subsequent Siberian migrations that followed the founding population

Divide and Conquer

While one group of early Native Americans stayed in Alaska, another moved south along the Pacific Coast, forming settlements in the modern US as well continuing into Central and South America.



25000 BCE

15000 BCE

French Foundations

A settlement is established by the French at Port Royal, known as Acadia, in Nova Scotia. It was the first permanent settlement by Europeans in what would become Canada.

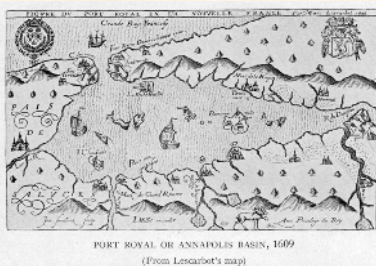


Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

The Lost Colony of Roanoke

121 Number of people led by John White to establish the first English settlement



Elizabeth Dare was the first English child born in the Americas in

1587

3

Number of years before John White visited the colony again, only to find every settler had mysteriously vanished

Proportions of Roanoke Island

8x2 MILES



Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

Planting the flag

The Spanish founded St Augustine, in modern-day Florida. This was the first permanent European settlement in North America and marked the start of wider colonisation of the New World.



Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

1605

1585

1565

Birth of Jamestown



Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

The Virginia Company established the first successful, permanent English settlement in Virginia, naming it for King James VI and I.

The Proclamation Line

King George III issues the Royal Proclamation of 1763 to ease tensions with Native Americans, forbidding white settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains, but did not curtail the pioneers for long.

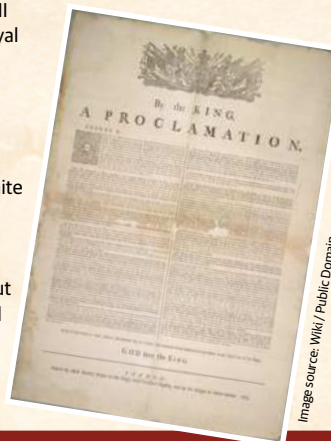


Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

Lewis and Clark Expedition

The newly independent United States charted Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to explore the Louisiana Purchase and the Pacific Northwest. The expedition party was aided by Sacagawea, a Shoshone woman.



Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

1607

1763

1804

Though long rumoured, evidence of Norse settlers in Newfoundland was not discovered until 1960

Viking Exploration

Norseman Leif Erikson and his crew travelled up and down the eastern coast before wintering in an area they called Vineland. Later Vikings also established permanent settlements, but they



Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

Columbus sails the ocean blue

3 Number of ships Columbus set sail with on his first voyage from Spain

1 ship sank

5 WEEKS

at sea before ships arrived in the Bahamas

90 Number of men in his crew

39 Crew members left behind to establish the La Navidad port in Haiti, all died



Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

Setting Boundaries

The treaty of Tordesillas was signed by Spain and Portugal to settle arguments over the lands newly discovered by Columbus and other explorers. The lands were divided up between the two countries.

1000

1492

1494

Conquering the Aztecs

Spaniard Hernán Cortés arrived in Central America with 500 men and 11 ships. He set about subjugating its Native American population, mostly notably killing the Aztec Emperor Montezuma II.



Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

Naming the New World

Italian explorer, navigator and cartographer Amerigo Vespucci was the first to realise that North America was actually a distinct continent and not part of Asia. The 'Americas' were then named after the Latin version of his first name.



Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

Sighting South America

Columbus reached South America on his third voyage, landing at the mouth of the Orinoco River, on the modern-day Colombia-Venezuela border. The zealous explorer thought he'd found the Garden of Eden.



Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

Re-foundland

Navigator John Cabot, working for King Henry VII of England, became the first European to set foot in Vinland in five centuries. Unaware of its previous Viking visitors, he dubbed it 'New-found-land'.



Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

1518

1503

1498

1497

Colombia was named after the famous explorer - but not until 1819

Go West

Many Americans headed west to escape the horrors of the civil war. The Homestead Act allowed would-be farmers to claim up to 160 Acres of the Great Plains, however this led to fresh clashes with Native Americans.



Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

The Final Frontier

The United States Census Bureau announced the end of the frontier line in the west, meaning there were no large tracts of land yet unexplored or left to settle.



Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

Native Americans Today

The total population of Native Americans and Alaska Natives in the US is

2.9 MILLION

Combined with other races, this number rises to **5.2 MILLION**

Alaska is the state has the highest proportion of Native Americans and Alaska Natives at

19.5%

1862

1890

2010

Imagesources Getty Images



“He secured the patronage of the Spanish monarchs Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile, who agreed to fund his plans to explore the New World”



Explorer • Icon • Murderer

Christopher Columbus

He was instrumental in defining the New World, but did he rule his new-found lands with a brutal and bloody iron fist?

— Written by Dom Reseigh-Lincoln —

The son of middle-class Genoan wool weavers, Christopher Columbus is not your usual child. Driven and incessantly inquisitive, the young boy is fascinated with the maps and charts the traders and seafarers bring to his coastal home city in Italy. Something about those empty spaces on the intricately marked canvas calls to him, a fantastical need to fill those gaps and claim the glory such discoveries would surely bring.

The unknown doesn't unsettle him, like it does many people of the time - in fact, it does the opposite: it captivates him. Seeing a rare tenacity in his eldest son, his father spends what money a wool weaver can spare and secures a place for Columbus at the University of Pavia. There he studies grammar, geography, geometry, astronomy, navigation and Latin - but for all his studies, the young Genoan finds his mind drifting to those blank voids on the map. This hunger would define his life forever.

In 1470, Columbus gains an apprenticeship working as a business agent for three influential

Genoan families. His learned background and tenacity in the face of adversity makes him a ferocious businessman and he's soon captaining ships that carve the ocean like blades. His work takes him far and wide across the civilised world: Lisbon, Bristol, Galway, West Africa and even settlements in Iceland become common ports of call. While deeply pious, Columbus steadily builds a reputation for ruthless determination. But for all his years of trade and commerce in these establishment lands, Columbus would always find his mind drifting to those incomplete maps he pored over as a child. The only thing standing between him and those fabled lands of untold riches was money. It was time to find a patron - an incredibly wealthy patron.

For many years, Europe held a distant yet lucrative trade relationship with the East. While under the rule of the once-rampant Mongol Empire, European traders travelled a relatively safe route of passage to China known as the Silk Road, but now that Constantinople had fallen to the Turks, the route was rife with piracy. The East was now too dangerous a path to take, even for

the most hardened of captains. Columbus was searching for a new route to India and the riches of Asia and to achieve this his plan was simple: sail west across the Ocean Sea (the 15th and 16th-century name for the Atlantic Ocean).

Sailing west wasn't just a case of turning your ships about and sailing away from the Orient, though. Since a portion of the map remained undefined on Western charts, the view of scholars, geographers and seafarers was a skewed one. Theories that the Earth was a flat disc persisted among some, but it was more the misinterpretations and speculation involving the distances between Europe and Asia, as well as the actual size of the mysterious continents and islands that were rumoured to lie beyond the storm-ridden oceans. Even Columbus' own theories were wildly inaccurate, but his intensity and sheer persistence made him stand out from his peers. He eventually secured the patronage of the Spanish monarchs Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile, who agreed to fund his plans to explore the New World and claim it in the name of a unified, Catholic Spain.

Florida

KEY

FIRST VOYAGE 1492-1493
SECOND VOYAGE 1493-1496
THIRD VOYAGE 1498-1500
FOURTH VOYAGE 1502-1504

2. DISCOVERING THE AMERICAS

12 OCTOBER 1492

After a five-week journey across the Atlantic, land was sighted. Aiming to land in Japan, Columbus had stumbled upon the Bahamas. He named the island San Salvador. Columbus' ships struggled to make anchor off the coast, so many of the natives dove into the water to assist them - they would be rewarded by enslavement.

6. EXPLORING SOUTH AMERICA

30 JULY 1502

Despite being stripped of his titles and his health failing, Columbus was still determined to explore the coasts of northern South America. After surviving a tropical hurricane, he and his crew landed in Honduras. He spent two months exploring the region, along with Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama.

4. PUNISHING THE NATIVES

22 NOVEMBER 1493

During his second voyage, Columbus paid a visit to his recent settlement of La Navidad. What he found was burning ruins, savaged by the native Taino people. In retaliation he demanded a tribute be made to him, or he'd cut the hands off every member of the tribe. He later sailed north and founded another settlement, La Isabela, but it failed to take root and fell apart in his absence.

3. ARRIVING IN HISPANIOLA

5 DECEMBER 1492

After a brief expedition into Cuba, Columbus arrived at Hispaniola. Due to bad weather, the Santa Maria ran aground on 25 December, but Columbus used the wreck as cannon-target practice. Columbus founded the settlement of La Navidad during this time, before continuing along the northern coast of Hispaniola in search of further discoveries.

5. SAILING THE ORINOCO

4-12 AUGUST 1498

While many of Columbus' personal calculations and assumptions turned out to be considerably wide of the mark, his study of the Gulf of Paria (between Trinidad and Venezuela) and the Orinoco River correctly led him to the conclusion that a considerable landmass was within reach. Upon reaching the coast, he marked that this bountiful land could well be the site of the biblical Garden of Eden.

THE VOYAGES OF COLUMBUS

Breaking down his four expeditions that changed the world

1. THE VOYAGES BEGIN

3 AUGUST 1492

After soliciting considerable patronage from the Spanish monarchs, Columbus sets off with an initial fleet of six ships from Palos de la Frontera, a principality in the Spanish province of Huelva. Columbus and his fleet arrive at the Castille-controlled Canary Islands, the starting point on his planned journey to Asia.

Caribbean Sea

Atlantic Ocean

South America

Central America



On the morning of 3 August 1492, with a contingent of three ships and two smaller caravels, Columbus sets sail from Palos de la Frontera. The swells are relatively calm and the ships carve a path toward the Canary Islands in a few days, before restocking supplies and setting sail for Japan. The three ships sail deeper into the unknown. Violent winds and angry swells buffet them across the waves, their intended course ripped apart by tropical storms these westbound seafarers have little experience with. By 12 October, morale on the ships is at a dangerously low - men have drowned in storms, masts have been broken by vicious gales and even a small mutiny breaks out. Columbus, sat within the confines of his cabin, stares at the maps before him. He knows their course has been broken, but it's the time at sea that troubles him the most. They should have set foot on new lands long before now. Time is running out.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, one of sailors above screams at the top of his voice: "Land! Land ahoy!" Columbus rushes from his desk, candles, papers and wine flying in his wake. The spray of the swaying oceans stings him in the face after so many hours in a stuffy cabin, but he's soon scrambling onto the poop deck, the prospect of land driving him forward. He squints and takes his first glimpse of a brand new world. Lush greenery and a pale-coloured beach can be seen in the

distance, unusual birds of a peculiar colour circling above the canopy. It's then that he sees them: dark-skinned men and women, most of them barely dressed at all, spears and bows clutched in their hands.

A few hours later, all three ships are anchored at a safe distance and the three crews are now safely on land. Columbus is standing upon Watling Island (which would later form part of the Bahamas). He names it San Salvador and claims it for the glory of Spain. Over the next few days, Columbus meets with the three main tribes of the island - the Taino, the Arawak and the Lucayan - and begins building a relationship that tells him a great deal about this new Eden. Only one other tribe, based on a distant island, is aggressive toward them, occasionally landing raiding parties to take slaves. In one of his journal entries, Columbus remarks: "I could conquer the whole of them with 50 men, and govern them as I please." Columbus views them less as people and more as another acquisition with which he can return to Spain. While this attitude may seem callous, it is a common one that will eventually drive and maintain the slave trade for hundreds of years to come. After a week or more on San Salvador, he begins searching the surrounding waters, eventually arriving on the northern coast of Cuba, before landing on the coast of Hispaniola on 5 December 1492.

A highly stylised depiction of Columbus' first landing in America in 1492



Hispaniola is a much larger land mass than the first island he embarked on, and with a calm sea behind him and stories of a realm rich with gold and other treasures, Columbus is confident he's found the beginning of his own legacy. In a matter of weeks he establishes a settlement on the island, La Navidad, and on 25 December orders a specially chosen crew of his most trusted seafarers to take the Santa Maria and sail north and conduct more reconnaissance. Unfortunately, Columbus is drunk at the time he gives the orders, as is the crew he appoints. In a matter of a few hours, half the crew fall asleep and the boat crashes into the rocks.

On 13 January 1493, Columbus meets with the carique (the head chieftain of the Taino peoples) of Hispaniola, Guacanagari, who agrees to the explorer's request to leave 39 of his crew behind to populate the settlement. He leaves on the last exploratory part of his first voyage and arrives some days later on the Samana Peninsula, where he encounters the far less friendly Ciguayos tribe. The carique on the island refuses to grant Columbus leave to establish a settlement; battle soon ensues and two of the tribe's people are killed. As punishment, Columbus captures 30 of

their people and sets sail for Spain - only seven of the captives survive the long trip back to Europe.

Upon returning to the court of the Spanish monarchs, Columbus becomes the talk of Europe with his journals, maps, fruits, spices, gold and native captives. His irrefutable proof of a new land between Europe and Asia now laid before them, Isabella and Ferdinand happily award Columbus the titles previously agreed, and he becomes the Admiral of the Open Sea and viceroy and governor of all the lands he discovers. In order to ensure the expansion of Hispaniola, Columbus sends his brother Bartolomeo along with a consignment of sailors, soldiers and tradesmen soon after.

On 24 September, Columbus sets out on his second major voyage. It's an expedition that takes a far more southerly route, taking in the other islands in the Bahamas, as well as a stopover in Jamaica. On 22 November, Columbus and his fleet of 17 ships turn their bows toward Hispaniola, the Genoan governor ready to see the plans he gave his brother back in Cadiz come to life. What he finds is a burning ruin. La Navidad has been razed, burned to a cinder by the Taino people that had been so accommodating the year before. He had brought civility to their

“La Navidad has been razed to the ground, burned to a cinder by the Taino people that had been so accommodating the year before”

Life on the waves

What was the reality of sailing the oceans in the 15th century?



Ship's surgeon

Life aboard a 150-tonne ship was fraught with dangers. Cannons could misfire, limbs could be broken by broken masts and flailing rigging, as well as the various diseases and ailments that could affect the crew. At the heart of all this was the ship's surgeon, whose role was to ensure a crew remained fit enough to fulfil their duties, however gruesome the treatment.



Boatswain

The boatswain was one of the most important members of a ship, and with that responsibility came its fair share of danger. A boatswain, usually the third or fourth mate, was in charge of maintaining the ship's deck and ensuring the sails and rigging remained in the best condition. In moments of emergency, such as a raging fire (a common occurrence due to power kegs overheating in hot, dry temperatures) and storms, a boatswain would be first on the scene.



Ordinary seaman

For all the master gunners and quartermasters, there was always need for seamen willing to do the hard graft that life at sea demanded. Known rather less affectionately to their fellow crew as 'swabbers', ordinary seamen found themselves doing the Santa Maria's worst jobs. Pumping and removing bilge (the stagnant water that collects in the lowest compartment of a ship), untangling knotted rigging and swabbing the decks clean were just some of their chores.



The Santa Maria was the largest ship in Columbus' small fleet, with its 17.7m-long (58ft) deck



Cutthroat Columbus

Three of the legendary explorer's most brutal actions

Public humiliation

Columbus and his like-minded brothers, Bartolomeo and Diego, were known for their psychological as well as physical torture. "Columbus' government was characterised by a form of tyranny", says Spanish historian Consuelo Varela. One such case involved a woman who dared to suggest Columbus was of lowly birth. Columbus' brother Bartolomeo had her stripped naked and paraded through the colony on the back of a mule. "Bartolomeo ordered that her tongue be cut out", adds Ms Varela. "Christopher congratulated him for defending the family."



Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

Worked into the ground

When Columbus arrived in the Bahamas in 1492, he discovered a number of peaceful native peoples, most notably the Taino tribe. Columbus himself remarked on how friendly these dark-skinned natives were - they carried few weapons either, since their society bred few if any criminals. He also discovered rich deposits of gold, so he claimed the land in the name of the Spanish Crown and enslaved that very tribe. Within two years, 125,000 - half the population - had died from working in Columbus' mines.



Image source: Getty Images

Slavery and mutilation

Columbus was a troubled man, paranoid and deeply suspicious, especially in his later years. According to one report, a man caught stealing corn had his ears and nose cut off at Columbus' request, before being sold into slavery. Enforced servitude became a common course of action for Columbus and his law-enforcing brothers. Columbus himself personally oversaw a sickening trade in sexual slavery, selling young Indian girls and women into a life of brutal prostitution.



The American natives the explorers encountered were initially very friendly and welcoming

Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

Columbus' legacy

How the conquistador changed the world

Columbus wasn't the first European to reach North America, but his mark on the world is clear. To quote historian Martin Dugard: "Columbus' claim to fame isn't that he got there first - it's that he stayed." Unlike the small settlements the Vikings created 500 years earlier, Columbus claimed the lands he found in the name of Spain and created significant communities that continued to expand from the coast.



Image source: Wiki / Public Domain



Image source: Wiki / public domain

Columbus has a national day in America but the explorer was guilty of some brutal crimes

darkened corner of the Earth. He had given them stability. He had given them the power of Christ. They had repaid him with a ruined settlement and countless butchered Spaniards.

In Columbus' absence, but very much following his direct orders, Hispaniola had quickly become a far-different place than the one they arrived at. The abundant and peaceful tribes of the island were happy to share the locations of the gold-rich valleys with their foreign guests, but they were less prepared for what came next.

Bartolomeo Columbus forced thousands of the natives into slavery, making them dig mines into the mountains, scouring it for precious metals. Hundreds of Europeans brought with them a great number of Western diseases, and such viruses spread through the unprepared natives like wildfire. Such conditions had led the Taino people to lead a rebellion against the foreign invaders, but their actions only galvanised Columbus' own desire for order and retribution.

With his brothers at his side and his Spanish patrons none the wiser, Columbus carved untold riches from the heart of the land. Such riches kept the Spanish monarchs happy, but rumours of brutality would soon spill out across the waves, with reports that Columbus' governorship had sent him mad with power. While reports of his brutality were true, they were seized upon with gusto by the many enemies he had made at the Spanish court, who were jealous of the riches he was making. It is likely his Spanish patrons did indeed have some idea to the lengths Columbus was willing to go to seek his fortune in the New World. However brutal he might have been, his efforts were still filling the coffers of the Spanish crown at a time where war had drunk them dry.

Columbus would conduct a third voyage before Ferdinand and Isabella were forced to send an emissary to investigate the claims that hung thickly over the Spanish court. After receiving the report, they stripped Columbus of his titles and sent the administrator Francisco de Bobadilla to further investigate and govern in his stead. When Bobadilla arrived in August 1500, the land he found was certainly a startling one. Columbus' seven-year rule of the island had enslaved a majority of the island's native inhabitants,

which had reduced a population of a few million free people to around 60,000 by 1500. He hears reports of Columbus selling young girls into sexual slavery and complaints that Columbus and his brothers would mutilate and humiliate anyone who stood in their way. The man who now has his own national holiday in the United States was eventually sent back to Spain in disgrace, but the Spanish monarchs

did not imprison or hang him; stripping him of their patronage and his titles had nearly broken an already sick and ailing man.

Columbus' legacy is defined by his passion for discovery, but some modern accounts are perhaps all too quick to forget he was a conquistador by name and by nature. Driven by a desire to chart and define the New World, Columbus had not only discovered new lands, he had helped establish a Western footing that would continue to expand for hundreds of years. In his later years he wrote: "By prevailing over all obstacles and distractions, one may unfailingly arrive at his chosen goal or destination." While his dastardly actions will always have a shadow over them, his life-long desire to banish the unknown will ensure his name lives on forever.

"Columbus' seven-year rule had enslaved a majority of the island's native inhabitants, which had reduced a population of a few million to around 60,000 by 1500"

The voyages in numbers

The shocking stats behind Columbus' conquistador career

3,700KM

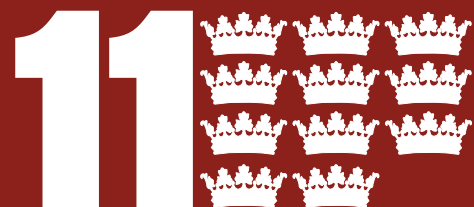
The distance between the Canary Islands and Japan, according to Columbus' calculations



17 The number of ships, made up mostly of durable, long-distance-ready carrack-style vessels, Columbus used in his second voyage in 1493

19,600KM

The actual distance between the Canary Islands and Japan. Despite the advice of cartographers and geographers, Columbus would not be swayed on his own estimates



Number of combined years Columbus spent exploring, with his four main voyages for the mighty Spanish Crown

1,500

The total number of colonists (mainly Spanish, Portuguese and Italian) that Columbus drafted for his first-ever voyage across the Atlantic Ocean

29 During his third voyage in 1502, Columbus lost 29 of the 30 ships he set sail with, after getting caught in a violent storm off the coast of Santo Domingo

10 EXPLORERS WHO HELPED DISCOVER THE AMERICAS

John Cabot

ITALIAN 1450-1499

Exploring the New World in the name of the Tudors



Explored: Newfoundland
Also: Nova Scotia (Canada);
Maine (United States)

John Cabot is believed by many historians to be the first European to set foot in North America since

the Vikings established Vinland in the 11th century. Under the patronage of King Henry VII of England, Cabot touched down in Newfoundland, Maine and Nova Scotia. Unfortunately, Cabot was neither the sailor nor the captain that Columbus was and his voyages have largely been forgotten.



Image source: Getty Images

Image source: Wiki / Public Domain



William Clark

AMERICAN 1770-1838

The man who co-charted and co-claimed the Pacific Northwest



Explored: Oregon
Also: Kansas City,
Missouri, Nebraska,
North Dakota

Politician. Soldier. Governor.

Explorer. William Clark remains one of the most influential men to ever chart his own country. At the beginning of the 19th century, North America was divided between the United States, Spain and France. Following the purchase of Louisiana from the French in 1803, Clark, alongside explorer Merriweather Lewis, led a two-year expedition that mapped a practical route through the wilds of the northern states.

“Elizabeth granted Raleigh a patent to explore the New World”

Image source: Wiki / Public Domain



Henry Hudson

ENGLISH 1560s-UNKNOWN

A China-bound seafarer who stumbled upon New York



Explored: New York (United States)

Also: Newfoundland, Nova Scotia (Canada)

While the particulars of Hudson's personal life remain speculative,

his actions as an explorer helped change European understanding of the New World's geographical layout. While attempting to create a direct route to Cathay (the medieval name for China), Hudson accidentally discovered what would become New York. In fact, Hudson's mapping of the region was so integral that a river was renamed in his honour.



Image source: Getty Images

The worst expeditions revealed

Some voyages into the unknown are famous for all the wrong reasons...



600 Spaniards die in the Gulf of Mexico

In 1527, the Spanish Crown sent a fleet to conquer and colonise Florida and the Gold Coast. A mutiny reduced the fleet at the Dominican Republic, while a hurricane drowned hundreds of Spanish sailors. The remaining survivors washed up on the coast of Florida, but many died at the hands of native tribesmen. Of the 600-strong crew, only four returned to Spain in 1528.



Magellan falls foul of the elements

Famous for almost circumventing the globe in the 16th century, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan miscalculated the size of the Pacific Ocean on a voyage to Asia. Most of his 270-strong crew died of thirst and hunger long before they made landfall on Guam. Those who didn't perish died at the hands of Filipino natives, including Magellan himself.



A fatal race to the South Pole

In 1911, a group of explorers lead by Captain Robert Scott attempted to be the first people to reach the South Pole, but they were beaten in their quest by a Norwegian team led by Roald Amundsen. These five men - Scott, Wilson, Oates, Bowers and Evans - paid the highest price and died. Scott has since been blamed for poor planning but bad luck also played its part as well.

Leifur Eiriksson

ICELANDIC CA 970 - CA 1020

500 years before Columbus, a Viking discovered the New World



Explored: Vinland (modern-day Newfoundland)

Viking explorer Leifur Eiriksson's travels across the oceans from Scandinavia helped establish a stronghold in Vinland (the Old

Norse name for North America). While Icelandic records like the *Saga Of The Greenlanders* point out Leifur wasn't the first Norseman to place a leathered sole on American soil, he galvanised Viking activity in Vinland. Although he died almost a thousand years ago, the fabled Norse explorer left a mark on Scandinavia and North America that still remains. Visitors to St Paul, Minnesota, will see a bronze statue of Leifur standing proudly near the Minnesota State Capitol, with his image symbolising the migration of Nordic people to America.



Robert Gray

AMERICAN 1755-1806

A captain who lost an eye, but gained an extraordinary legacy



Explored: California (United States)
Also: British Columbia (Canada); Washington, Oregon

A merchant sea captain, Gray pioneered the maritime fur trade on the Northern Pacific coast of his home nation, discovering more regions as he pushed trade further up and down that side of the country. He's most famously credited with the first American circumnavigation of the globe, as well as the travelling on and naming of the Columbia River in 1792. To this day, many geographic features in Washington and Oregon bear his name to mark his historical legacy.

James Cook

BRITISH 7 NOV 1728 - 14 FEB 1779

A military man turned explorer who met his end in the new worlds he discovered



Explored: Hawaii
Also: Saint Lawrence River (Canada/United States)

Much like Columbus and Marco Polo, captain James Cook's name is synonymous with early

exploration. He began his career as a teenager when he joined the Merchant Navy, seeing action in many naval clashes of the Seven Years War. Cook then used his experiencing charting the Saint Lawrence River during the Siege of Quebec to gain the command of three expeditions around the world. Cook's travels also brought him to the island of Hawaii, where his expert cartography skills enabled him to chart the islands with a detail unrivalled by his peers. He died during a clash with native Hawaiians during this third major voyage in 1779.



Sir Walter Raleigh

ENGLISH 1554-1618

Poet, soldier, courtier, spy, explorer



Explored: North Carolina, South Carolina
Also: Georgia, Florida (United States)

Perhaps one of the most famous explorers save Columbus himself,

Sir Walter Raleigh gained favour in the court of Elizabeth I, with his many fabled bounties of treasure and exotic items typifying the Golden Age of the monarch's reign. Following years of war with France and Spain, English merchants were now pushing farther afield into Asia, Africa and the New World. As well as being famous for his pursuit of El Dorado (the City of Gold), Raleigh was instrumental in the English colonisation of North America. In the late-1580s, Elizabeth granted Raleigh a royal patent to explore the New World in the name of the English Crown.



Claude-Jean Allouez

FRENCH 1622-1689

A passionate zealot who explored the New World



Explored: Wisconsin
Also: Michigan, Indiana (United States)

Born in France, Allouez was a Jesuit missionary who travelled to Canada in order to help solidify a series of missions in the region. As part of his religious journey, Allouez regularly came into contact with members of native tribes, which eventually led him south into the future United States. His initial work setting up a number of missions in Wisconsin also coincided with his travels down the Mississippi River. His extensive and detailed notes of the areas he explored helped the French crown to later claim the Great Lakes for themselves.



Hernando de Soto

SPANISH, 1497-1542

This conquistador plundered the South for riches



Explored: Florida
Also: Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Texas

(United States)

Much like English seafarer Henry Hudson, the Spanish conquistador Hernando de Soto initially stumbled upon North America while sailing for China. He had set voyage for the East in search of treasure for the financially precarious Spanish Crown, but instead found a land rich with gold and silver deposits, lush and untamed. While he is most famous for having the first documented crossing of the Mississippi River by a foreigner, his expeditions took him to Oklahoma, Georgia, the Carolinas, Tennessee, Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi.

David Thompson

BRITISH-CANADIAN 1770-1857

The "greatest land geographer that ever lived"



Explored: Nevada
Also: British Columbia, Alberta (Canada); Oregon, Montana, Wyoming,

The Westminster-born Thompson headed south from Canada

into the wilderness of North America and began uncovering its secrets. Over a career that lasted most of his life, Thompson managed to map a staggering 3.9 million square kilometres (1.5 million square miles) of topography across the Frontier. He started his project around 1793 with his expeditions into the Rocky Mountains, before creating a detailed map of trading posts across the region, including Montana and Idaho. Among other things, the explorer has a highway named after him in Canada.



Day in the life

Sailor for Columbus

A seaman on Christopher Columbus's flagship voyaging to the new world Atlantic Ocean, 1492

As a sailor heading towards the unknown Americas, there wouldn't have been any shortage of tasks, and the work would have been hard and, in many cases, perilous. They were exploring uncharted waters, and doing so in cramped conditions, with makeshift sleeping areas and bland provisions. The flagship of the expedition, the Santa Maria, ultimately didn't survive Columbus's first transatlantic voyage, as it ran aground off Haiti in December 1492 and was abandoned, but it nevertheless remains an emblem of the explorer's achievements and provides a fascinating case study into life aboard a 15th-century vessel.

Breakfast

Shortly before the first shift commenced, the crew would get up and eat breakfast. This was generally a cold and savoury meal, often consisting of salted fish, biscuits and some cheese (fresh food was usually eaten within the first week of the voyage, as it went stale quickly). Much of the food on the Santa Maria would have been pretty basic but healthy enough.



Salted fish was a staple on sea voyages because it kept for long periods

Start of shift

The crew were divided into two watches, rotating every four hours. The first watch, known as the Cuartos, began at seven o'clock. Certain sailors were assigned specific roles: two men were posted on the bow and the round-top on the main mast; while another was charged with recording the compass direction and the ship's speed, as dictated by the Santa Maria's master or pilot.

Setting the sails

Part of the general duties for sailors on the first watch was to raise, lower and set the sails using the various lines, as well as carrying out general maintenance tasks on the relevant equipment as and when appropriate. It was common for them to sing as they went about their work in order to stick to a rhythm and keep up morale.



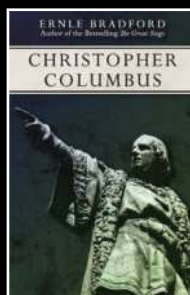
“The majority of the crew would have to make do with any open space they could find [to sleep]”



The Santa Maria battled a number of storms en route to the New World

How do we know this?

The Santa Maria's journal kept a detailed account of the journey, of which a number of extracts written by Columbus biographer Bartolomé de Las Casas have survived. These focus more on distance covered and notable discoveries, but they nonetheless provide a valuable insight into what this voyage of discovery entailed. Also useful through the course of research for this article was the book *Christopher Columbus* by Ernle Bradford (1973).



Sailor for Columbus

Clearing the deck

In order to ensure the smooth running of the ship, sailors were also tasked with making sure the walkways and decks were clear at all times. Any debris left over from bad weather or maintenance had to be cleaned away, and the decks and rails needed to be scrubbed at regular intervals.

End of first watch

The first watch ended, allowing the second watch – the Guardias – to begin. In the subsequent four hours the Cuartos watch were given a chance to socialise. Some of the activities they participated in included singing, dancing and playing musical instruments. Fishing was popular too because fresh fish was considered a great delicacy.

Dog watch

The shift between 5pm and 7pm was divided into two 'dog watches', effectively allowing the crews to switch over. This was done so as to ensure that the crews weren't constantly working the same shifts, and most pointedly to avoid always having to work the dark and cold midnight 'graveyard watch' – traditionally a rather unpopular shift for obvious reasons.

Time for prayer

Every 30 minutes, the ship's boy would turn the glass (which was shaped like an hourglass). While doing this he would sing a prayer, which as well as letting the crew know the time also acknowledged the Roman Catholic beliefs of the majority of the personnel. Specific prayers would be sung at certain times of the day; at sunset, the prayer was the Salve Regina (Hail Holy Queen), for instance.

Sleep

Having completed their second shift, the majority of the crew would attempt to get some shut-eye in the few hours until they started work again. While Columbus and some of the other officers had their own quarters, the majority of the crew would have to make do with any open space they could find. Below deck was where the supplies and privies were located, so that area was generally avoided.





Fall of the Aztecs

Cortés vs Moctezuma

How the most powerful civilisation in South America was brought to its knees by a Spanish conquistador driven by desire for gold and riches

Written by Robin Brown

Hernán Cortés was well acquainted with danger: he had faced turbulent and angry seas on journeys, men who wanted to kill him, and probable exile. His daring move to claim ancient

Mexico for himself had put him in direct conflict with an erstwhile friend, the governor of Cuba - the nearest Spanish settlement - and he faced a long, arduous and potentially lethal combination of conditions on the road to Tenochtitlán, capital of the mighty Aztec Empire.

Ruled by the famous Moctezuma II, Tenochtitlán was the base of power of the Aztec Empire, stretching from coast to coast and ruling over a vast number of indigenous people. The Aztecs controlled a huge territory and enormous mineral wealth, vital strategic coastlines and countless slaves, using networks of spies loyal to Moctezuma II who watched over the various native groups that paid fealty to the Aztec ruler. To conquer the Aztecs, Cortés had to overcome the most feared soldiers on the entire American continent - previous expeditions to South America

had returned with grisly and horrifying stories of human sacrifice.

Having set sail from Cuba in February 1519, by April, Cortés' expedition was in big trouble. His men were disgruntled at the prospect of heading inland, in apparent contradiction of their original terms of engagement, and openly discussed mutinying. They wished to return to the relative comfort of Cuba from their temporary base at what would become the port of Veracruz. However, their leader had literally and metaphorically mortgaged everything he owned to reach the Yucatán peninsula. Nothing will dissuade him from marching to Tenochtitlán and the wealth, power and destiny he believed was his to claim. To this end, Cortés committed one of the most audacious acts in military history.

Knowing that while his fleet remained in Veracruz there was a chance that his men could rebel and return to Cuba, ending his dreams of conquest and riches, Cortés scuttled his entire fleet - literally sinking his only connection with the Spanish colonies, supplies and reinforcements.



Aztec warrior

GETTING A HEAD

Warriors wore clothes reflecting their military group. The more decorated the clothing, the more decorated the warrior. Jaguar warriors would wear the whole skins of jaguars. Eagle warriors bore feathers from the great birds.

KILLER DARTS

The atlatl was a long dart mounted on a longer length of wood, propelled by a flipping motion with devastating speed and range, up to 180m (600ft). Stronger and faster than an arrow, they were devastating to other natives but of limited use against Spanish armour.

CLUBBED TO DEATH

The macahuitl was a close-contact weapon consisting of an oak staff studded with flint or volcanic rock and used at close quarters in clubbing or hacking motions. It was reputedly strong enough to decapitate a horse with one blow.

The realisation that they were stranded in a hostile and remote land struck fear into the heart of the conquistadors, but Cortés was resolute, telling them to believe in him but allowing the men to make for home in the one returning ship if they desired. None wished to return home, won over by Cortés' eloquence

and sheer daring. With the success of this incredible gamble, Cortés couldn't possibly have known that while he had ensured his expedition's success he had also doomed the famous Aztec Empire.

One of the most powerful nations on the Earth, Cortés' Spain had already made several forays into Central and South America by the early-16th century.

Cuba and the Dominican Republic had been conquered by 1519 and in the previous two years many expeditions to Mexico had been sanctioned by Diego Velásquez de Cuéllar, a friend of Cortés.

Cuba had been conquered and as Velásquez named its first governor, Cortés was rewarded with land

MOTECUZUMA II

Aztec, 1466 – 29 June 1520

Moctezuma, whose name meant, 'he is one who frowns like a lord', was tall and well-proportioned. Descended from royalty, he ruled through fear and was worshipped as a deity by many of the people across the empire. Written records tend to portray Moctezuma as indecisive, weak and naive but historians cast doubt on the accuracy of these reports.

on the island and made a magistrate of Santiago. However, the meagre wages were not enough for Cortés. A second expedition departed in 1518 but when the leader failed to return on time, Velásquez ordered a third expedition to Mexico. Ignoring the ill omens of this and focusing on the first expedition, which returned with gold and slaves, Cortés sensed his chance, mortgaged everything he owned and volunteered to finance the expensive journey himself.

Hungry for success and the wealth and power that triumphing over the Aztec nation with its huge resources would bring, Cortés feverishly prepared for his new endeavour. He initially enjoyed the backing of Velásquez but, as the journey neared, the Cuban ruler came to suspect Cortés of planning to seize the new world in his own name. He was not mistaken in his suspicions. Cortés had no intention of remaining loyal to Velásquez, who sent an official government messenger to let the Spaniard know he was being relieved of his command; Cortés simply had the messenger killed. Velásquez then ordered local officials in Havana to stop the conquistador, yet the men sent to prevent the journey ended up volunteering for the expedition,

TENOCHTITLÁN

The city was connected to the mainland by causeways leading north, south, and west. These causeways had bridges that allowed canoes to pass freely underneath and the bridges could be pulled away to defend the city. While horrified by the human sacrifice, the Conquistadors were impressed by the city's vast scale.

Image source: Joe Cummings

buying into Cortés' vivid promises of riches and power. The conquistador was a formidable manipulator and diplomat. He was able to rise to the occasion, to adapt and overcome, rely on unknown and untested allies, balance diplomacy with war and respond to savagery with savagery to overcome Velásquez, the most powerful man in South America.

On 18 February 1519, without official authorisation, Cortés set sail from Cuba with 11 ships and over 500 men. He sailed west, disturbing the peace of the beautiful tropical island of Cozumel, on the Yucatán coast. Cortés was the best-armed European to hit the continent, with cutting-edge weaponry, including cannons that some sources believe represented the first use of gunpowder in the New World. Against

HERNÁN CORTÉS DE MONROY Y PIZARRO

Spanish, 1485 – 1547

Cortés was born into a poor family but schooled in the ways of war from an early age. He landed in the Dominican Republic aged 19 and by 25 had befriended Diego Velásquez. Cortés joined him in his conquest of Cuba and saw that leading an expedition to the new world was the path to untold riches and power. He sacked the Aztec capital city and through war and disease brought about the fall of the great American civilisation.

the flints, spears and arrows of the South American tribes they represented devastatingly superior armaments. Along with muskets and crossbows effective up to 90 metres (300 feet), Cortés' men, although vastly outnumbered, had the advantage.

Cortés first met with a group of Maya, the tribe that had dominated the Yucatán 1,000 years prior. The Mayans had previously taken a Spaniard named Alonso de Aguilar captive – as a result Cortés was able to communicate with the Mayans, an incredible stroke of luck. The small fleet sailed around the Yucatán coast to Potonchan, arriving there in mid-March 1519. The natives there had previously given gold to a Spanish expedition

Spanish Conquistador

ON YOUR HEAD

The typical conquistador head-dress was a heavy steel-crested helmet with sweeping sides that came to points on either end. Cortés considered helmets the most important part of his men's armour and had them mass-produced in Cuba before setting sail.

SWORDS OF STEEL

Conquistadors were armoured with steel swords. Narrow, but about 1m (3ft) in length, they were equipped with very sharp sides, against which the native Americans had little protection. The Spanish steel could survive a full-force impact with a

SPANISH BRIGANTINES

The ships Cortés' party used were large and held many men who could fire on the Aztec warriors. However, the ships' size was also a disadvantage, as they would often get stuck, which left them vulnerable to attack.

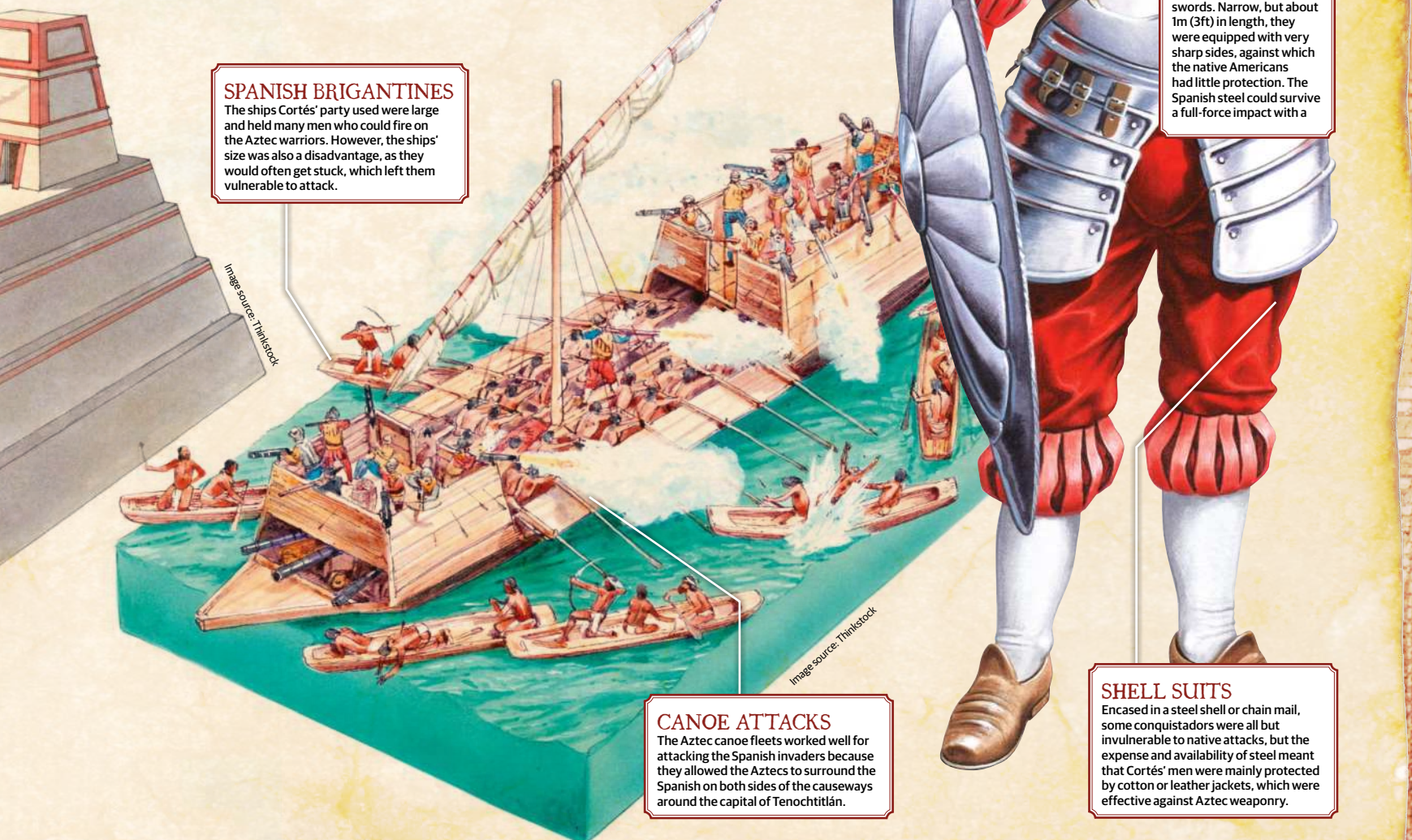
CANOE ATTACKS

The Aztec canoe fleets worked well for attacking the Spanish invaders because they allowed the Aztecs to surround the Spanish on both sides of the causeways around the capital of Tenochtitlán.

SHELL SUITS

Encased in a steel shell or chain mail, some conquistadors were all but invulnerable to native attacks, but the expense and availability of steel meant that Cortés' men were mainly protected by cotton or leather jackets, which were effective against Aztec weaponry.

“The Aztecs had never seen beasts trained to attack men before and this radically different form of warfare struck fear into the native fighting groups”



Age of Discovery

and Cortés hoped for a similar reception. However, upon arrival, he was not welcomed with gold, but warriors. Finding that diplomacy was of little use, Cortés deployed another devastating shock-and-awe weapon: war dogs trained to kill and conquistadors mounted on horses.

The Aztecs had never seen beasts trained to attack men before and this radically different form of warfare struck fear and chaos into the native fighting groups. Powerless to take on Cortés' men and disturbed by the presence of the animals - some of which they had never seen before - on the battlefields, the warriors were physically and psychologically broken.

In defeat and supplication, the natives brought food, gold and 20 women for the Spaniards, including a woman known as La Malinche. Crucially, she knew the languages spoken by both Mayan and Aztec peoples, meaning Cortés was able to communicate to the Aztecs - with Malinche

converting Aztec into Mayan, and Aguilar translating from Mayan to Spanish. This was bad news for the Aztecs, and it's argued Malinche betrayed her own people. But for Cortés, this luck meant he had another link in the chain of making good on his desire to rule over South America.

Moving on across the Gulf of Mexico, the group encountered native people disgruntled at having to pay taxes to Moctezuma and at giving up their people to make up the human sacrifices the Aztec gods demanded. Cortés was able to take advantage of the misery and disgruntlement of the various ethnic groups, nine in total, that were part of the Aztec Empire, ruled from the unique island capital of Tenochtitlán.

The capital was built in the middle of a lake and grid-lined with canals; simply put, it was one of the most awe-inspiring cities the world had ever seen. Over the previous 100 years, its population had grown to 250,000 and the small island swelled as the Aztecs reclaimed land from

the lake. It was larger than any city in Europe at the time of Cortés' arrival and twice the population of London.

The Aztecs had ruled from Tenochtitlán for hundreds of years, subjugating nearby tribes and ruling over 10 million people, maintaining an iron grip over a great expanse of land. As a result, the Aztec ruler (or tlatoani), Moctezuma, had known of Cortés' approach long before the Spaniards approached Tenochtitlán.

Instead of sending warriors, they responded by sending an emissary to greet him, laden with gifts of gold that weren't treasured by the Aztecs, but seemed irresistible to the Spanish. As Cortés said of the precious metal, "We Spaniards suffer from a disease of the heart, which only gold can cure."

Knowing of the Spaniards' lust for gold and precious stones, Moctezuma offered these gifts on the condition that Cortés stopped his march on Tenochtitlán. There was no chance of this, though, and the gifts merely whetted his appetite for treasure. Cortés signalled that he intended to reach the capital to pay tribute to Moctezuma.



Piedra del Sol, the Aztec Sun stone, played an important role in governing the Aztecs' life



NOBLE WARRIORS

The noble warrior class made up the special military elite units. These were formed from warrior societies such as the eagle and jaguar, and warriors would dress accordingly.

"Cortés said of the precious metal, 'We Spaniards suffer from a disease of the heart, which only gold can cure'"

PLUNDER

Many of Cortés' men had doubts about the expedition but the lure of gold and other bounties, as well as their leader's strong character, had driven them on.



GOLD NOT VALUED

The Aztecs did not value gold in the same way as the Europeans, preferring to use it decoratively rather than as currency. They did not fully understand the appetite Cortés' men had for it.

Siege of Tenochtitlán

The key events in the bloody siege of the great Aztec capital

The Aztecs revolt

With Cortés heading off an invasion force, Pedro de Alvarado was left in command in Tenochtitlán. Relations deteriorated when the festival of Toxcatl was misinterpreted as hostility and Alvarado initiated the killing of thousands of Aztec nobles, warriors, priests and civilians before retreating to the Palace of Axayacatl.

La Noche Triste

The events sparked an all-out assault by the Aztecs on the Spaniards and, following Moctezuma's death, the Spanish position in Tenochtitlán was dangerously compromised. Hopelessly outnumbered, the Spanish and their allies had to flee the capital. Cortés reportedly wept during the aftermath of the Aztec massacre.

Waterways and canals

There were just three land routes to the island city of Tenochtitlán and these routes in and out of the city would become the battleground during the siege. Ambushed in the canals, the Spanish were slaughtered, drowned or captured. Alvarado escaped by using his spear to pole vault over a canal but only a third of Cortés' men escaped.

Escape to Tlaxcala

Cortés and his allies returned to Tlaxcala to regroup, but not before they encountered a Aztec army intent on destroying the remainder of their force in the Otumba Valley (Otompan). Despite losses, Cortés escaped and rebuilt a coalition. Cortés planned to trap and besiege the Aztecs within their capital.

Tenochtitlán under siege

Cortés built small warships and relationships with neighbours of Tenochtitlán. He used the ships to counter Aztec canoes and gained ground on the causeways to the capital, which had been hit by the dual blow of loss of supplies and a devastating outbreak of smallpox. Despite fierce fighting, Tenochtitlán was routed and a huge number of inhabitants killed. Cortés built what is now Mexico City.

MILITARY MIGHT

Although Cortés was outnumbered in numbers, his men were much better armed with high-quality swords and armour.

WARRIORS

To be a warrior was a respected profession in Aztec society. The Aztecs didn't forge metal so they constructed weapons out of wood and stone.

WIPED OUT

The Aztec warriors fought bravely on land and on sea, but a combination of constant attacks, lack of provisions and disease such as smallpox eventually led to their demise.



An illustration of the great city of Tenochtitlán

Image source: wiki © Guillermo Marín and Gum51

Image source: Thinkstock

Wife and translator

Without his translator and wife-to-be, Cortés could probably not have triumphed in Mexico. La Malinche offered a vital connection between his language and that of the Aztecs.

La Malinche was one of 20 slaves offered to the conquistadors and served as translator and mediator; it is likely she had previously received formal education, explaining her abilities to speak a number of South American dialects.

She became Cortés's concubine and gave birth to a son, Martín, with Cortés, one of the first people born of mixed Spanish and South American genetic make-up, and died aged around 25. Some see her as a traitor who facilitated the subjugation of her own people but others as an intelligent strategist who made the best of her situation.



La Malinche aided Cortés in communicating with Aztec emissaries

In reality, his intentions were a lot less benign, but Moctezuma wasn't so naive that he wouldn't have any idea of what the true intent of the conquistador was.

Moctezuma knew he had a problem and feared the approach of the conquistadors: Cortés had arrived at a time in the Aztec calendar that did not allow for battle, nor for the training of his warriors - Aztec society was strictly governed by calendars. To make matters worse, as a profoundly spiritual and superstitious people, the Aztecs had been struck by a series of portents that boded ill for the empire: a comet sighted in the sky during the day, fires in two temples in the capital and the violent eruption of the volcano Popocatepetl. The dragon-like South American god Quetzalcoatl - the feathered serpent - was prophesied to return from



The Aztec mask of Quetzalcoatl

the east in 1519 to rule over the land around this time - he was also bearded and white-skinned. The parallels with Cortés were hard to ignore.

Whether Moctezuma genuinely believed that Cortés was the living embodiment of Quetzalcoatl is hard to discern. Spanish accounts of Cortés' expedition paint the Aztecs as gullible and deferential, but many modern historians believe this to be a classic case of the

victors writing the history books, or a complete misapprehension of

Moctezuma's initial politeness toward Cortés, as Aztecs used politeness to assert dominance. Regardless, the time and nature of Cortés' arrival was another stroke of luck. By August 1519, Cortés and his men were a mere 320 kilometres (200 miles) from Tenochtitlán, with the Aztec ruling elite ambivalent as to what to do next.

Some favoured a violent confrontation away from the city, but Moctezuma - rattled by what he saw as ominous portents and realising that his gifts would not persuade Cortés to abandon his march on the capital - allowed Cortés to approach further.

“The Aztec god Quetzalcoatl was prophesied to return from the east in 1519 to rule over the land around this time – he was also bearded and white-skinned. The parallels with Cortés were hard to ignore”



CONQUERORS

Before they claimed the capital city, the Spanish conquistadors and their allies raided several Aztec villages along the way. Many Aztecs were killed or enslaved by the forces.

Having secured his Spanish force's allegiance by destroying his own fleet, Cortés ensured that he grew his army from the 500 he started out with by convincing the native people to rise up against the Aztecs, who taxed them and would take their people as sacrificial victims. Cortés had allied with some of the best fighters in Mexico and long-standing enemies of the Aztecs, the Tlaxcalans, even converting some to Christianity, by demonstrating his military might but also by respecting the Tlaxcala traditions.

Together, the Spaniards and their native allies sealed their allegiance with the massacre of hundreds of natives at Cholula in October 1520, who were firmly under Aztec rule at the time, following a supposed assassination plot against Cortés. The killings numbered anywhere between 3,000 and 30,000 and sent a chilling message to Moctezuma - resist us and die. By November 1519, Cortés had 50,000 American allies and had arrived in Tenochtitlán, bringing an army of the

Aztec Empire's enemies right to its front door.

For their part, the conquistadors were dumbstruck when they saw the size, intricacy and genius of Tenochtitlán, a city essentially built in the middle of a giant lake and probably the largest and most sophisticated city on Earth at the time. This was the prize Cortés had risked everything for and spent nine months plotting, fighting, marching and killing for. Whether suing for peace or truly believing him to be the incarnation of a god, Moctezuma initially



A statue of the Aztec god of rain, Tlaloc, a major deity

welcomed Cortés to Tenochtitlán, inviting the Spaniards to the city and into his palace, where they were lavished with precious metals, allegedly saying to Cortés' men: "You have come to your city: Mexico, here you have come to sit on your place, on your throne. Oh, it has been reserved to you for a small time, it was conserved by those who have gone, your substitutes... Come to the land, come and rest: take possession of your royal houses, give food to your body."

The Aztec tlatoani greeted Cortés as the reincarnation of Quetzalcoatl and the two men apparently paid tribute to one another - Moctezuma, according to the Spaniards, pledging his loyalty to Cortés - though the Spaniards were horrified at seeing the extent and nature of the Aztec's predilection for human sacrifice. In

Human sacrifices

How common was human sacrifice?

The Aztecs dominated most of the surrounding city states at its height, with around 10 million subjects. Making constant human sacrifices meant the numbers of sacrificed people were huge and probably the greatest number in human history.

Who performed it?

The Aztecs had large numbers of priests who would carry out the sacrifices, usually one male and one female priest would officiate. As a result, they would develop good anatomical skills in removing the skin and organs of sacrificial victims.

Why was it done?

The Aztecs subjugated other native people and demanded tributes in the form of human sacrificial victims, required to placate and please the Aztec gods. Sacrificial victims frequently went to their deaths willingly, promised great riches in the next life. For their part, the Aztecs did not carry out these sacrifices out of bloodlust, but because they believed they were necessary for continued prosperity.

How was it done?

Cortés was horrified by what he saw at Tenochtitlán - the scale and brutality of the human sacrifices disgusting even the violent conquistadors. Aztec warriors attempted to capture their enemies alive, in order to sacrifice them to the Aztec gods. A number of horrific methods were documented at the time: hearts were often removed and shown to the Sun; victims were flayed alive and their skin worn by priests and tributes were often boiled in huge vats, the priest and other nobility believed it was important to ingest the essence of fallen enemies.

WORST OF ALL...

Once every 52 years, the high priests ascended the highest hill in Tenochtitlán and at midnight one priest would kill a captive and pull out his heart; inside the victim's chest cavity he would attempt to ignite a fire. If the priest failed the Aztecs believed the stars would go out and the Gods would consume the Earth.

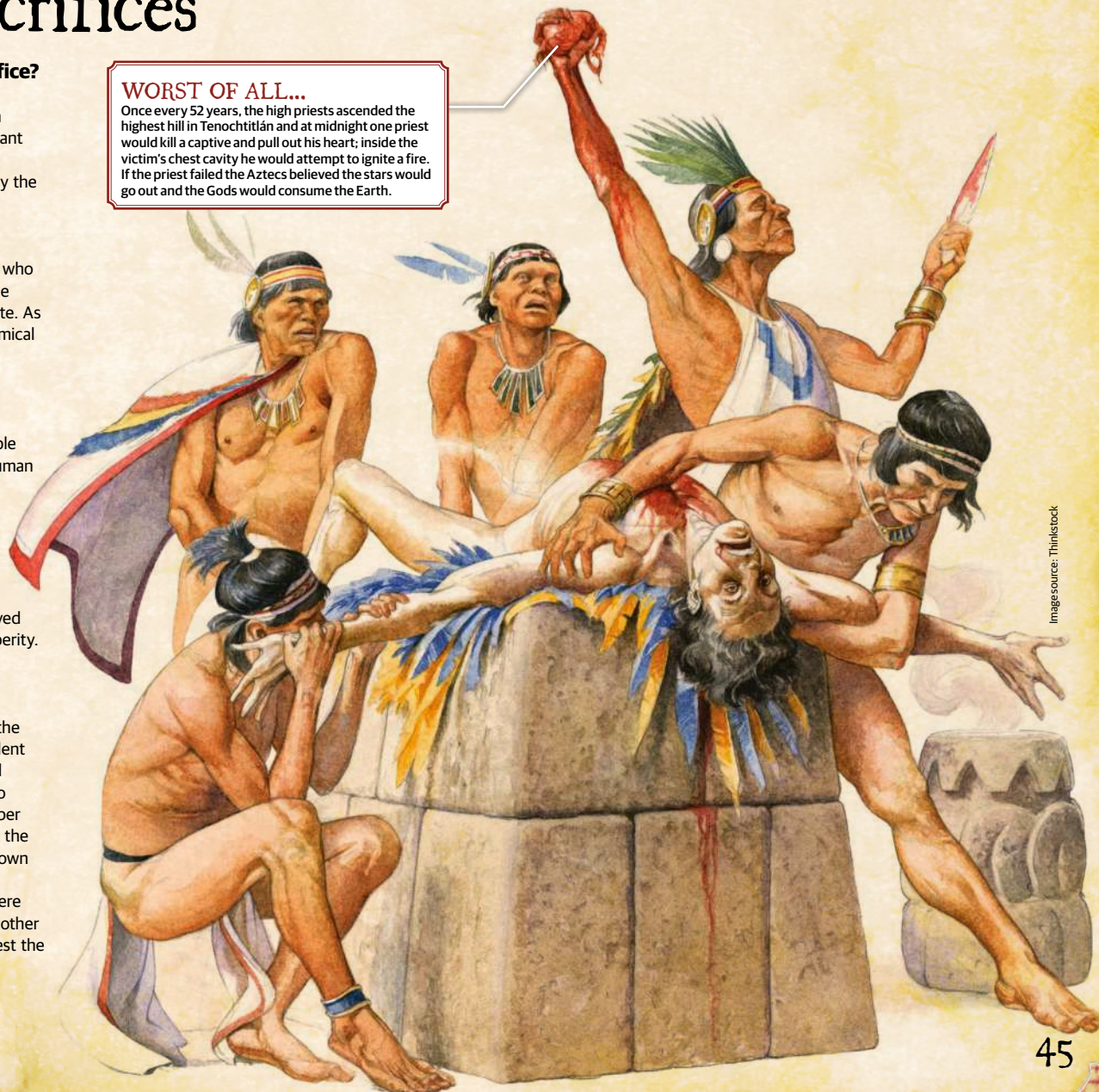


Image source: Thinkstock

Why some natives sided with Cortés

Despite the breadth of the Aztec Empire, there existed an uneasy state of low-level attrition warfare throughout Mexico. These so-called Flower Wars were low-level but ongoing skirmishes designed to weaken opponents by making them commit ever-higher percentages of human resources to battles. Because Aztec religion was based on sourcing sufficient captives for human sacrifices, it suited the Aztecs to keep their enemies alive rather than slaughtering them on the battlefield.

This led to hatred on the parts of other tribes - most notably the Tlaxcala, the Aztecs' blood enemies. Cortés played on the resentment and envy of other native tribes to turn them against Moctezuma, but had another tactic available to him - the brutal slaughter of any native who disobeyed his wishes.



Image source: Thinkstock

Key
 ■ Aztec Empire
 ■ 1519 route
 ■ 1521 route

Mexico

Tenochtitlán

INVADERS ARRIVE

On 18 February 1519, Cortés set sail from Cuba with 11 ships and over 500 men. He arrived at Cozumel on the Yucatán coast and then the fleet sailed around the coast to Potonchan before they made their way towards Tenochtitlán.

Gulf of Mexico

FALL OF THE AZTECS

After being driven out of Tenochtitlán in 1520, the invaders regrouped nearby at Tlaxcala. They then launched a series of attacks that, along with disease among the Aztecs, led to the fall of the great city.

Pacific Ocean



Image source: Dreamstime

Image source: freevectormaps.com



Image source: Joe Cummings

response, Cortés had Moctezuma clapped in irons; the tlatoani subsequently held hostage in his own palace by the conquistadors as they raided the city's riches. The devoutly Catholic Spanish also destroyed the Aztec idols, put a stop to human sacrifices but the natives did not rebel.

Despite their unexpected pliability, Cortés faced problems from an unexpected place, just as he had Tenochtitlán in his grasp. An arresting party arrived on the coast from Cuba with orders to kill or capture him, so in May 1520, Cortés headed east to meet the party from Cuba, leaving 140 Spaniards and some Tlaxcalans under the command of a deputy, Pedro de Alvarado, to hold Tenochtitlán. Cortés set out against Pánfilo de Narváez with fewer troops than his rival but launched a surprise night attack. After his victory, he convinced many of the defeated soldiers to join up with him, using the vast amounts of gold and promises of more as a powerful bargaining tool.

Arriving back at Tenochtitlán, Cortés found a scene of utter chaos. Supposedly mistaking Aztec preparations for a spiritual festival for something more sinister - and mindful of the hundreds of thousands of Aztecs surrounding them - Alvarado and the remaining conquistadors had massacred the priesthood and nobility



Image source: Thinkstock

The Aztecs were a very advanced civilisation

“The Spaniards were driven from the capital by the furious Aztecs, Cortés barely escaping with his life”

in Tenochtitlán. Cortés was forced to fight his way back into the city but, by July 1520, he and his men were surrounded in the palace. Sensing the mood of the crowd, Cortés had Moctezuma brought out to placate his people, only for them to reject their tlatoani as a traitor. What happened next has remained a source of historical debate for centuries.

Spanish records suggest that the Aztecs stoned Moctezuma to death; more recent interpretations suggest that Moctezuma was murdered when he was no longer of use to the Spaniards. Some reports indicate that Moctezuma was mourned by the Spanish conquistadors, while another claims that Cortés killed the Aztec ruler by stabbing him in the back, or even by brutally pouring molten gold down his throat. What is known is that Moctezuma's death coincided with a violent uprising within Tenochtitlán. The Spaniards were driven from the capital by the furious Aztecs, Cortés barely escaping with his life. In their desperation to flee their attackers, many conquistadors jumped into canals, where they

drowned, weighted down by the weight of looted gold in their clothes or pulled down by Aztec warriors. The Aztecs had vanquished the conquistadors and banished them from the city. The affair was later referred to by the Spaniards as 'La Noche Triste' - 'The Sad Night.'

Although they fled the city, the conquistadors left behind something much deadlier than their cannons, fighting dogs or allied natives. In 1520, an epidemic of smallpox struck Tenochtitlán with ferocity, leaving large numbers of its population dead and those remaining too weak or hungry to fend for themselves. By the time Cortés and the conquistadors returned to Tenochtitlán with furious vengeance, razing the city to the ground to the point that the location of the iconic Great Temple was lost for centuries, the Aztec Empire was crumbling to the ground, there to remain for several centuries until excavations in Mexico City started to reveal fragments of the once-great civilisation. Over only the first decade following the arrival of the conquistadors, around 80 per cent of the population of central Mexico died, wiped out by devastating communicable diseases brought to the continent by Hernán Cortés' invasion force and the other Spaniards arriving there.

Cortés and his allies retreated to Tlaxcala, where they were bolstered by unexpected supplies,

BRANDING SLAVES

On the shoulder of each captive, whether they were a child or an old man, the hot iron was applied. The letter G (for 'guerra', meaning 'war') was burned deep into the flesh as a permanent brand.



Image source: Thinkstock



Moctezuma II was the ninth ruler of Tenochtitlán

Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

and started to build alliances among the towns that surround the lake on which Tenochtitlán lay. Over the next months, Cortés blockaded the capital - cutting the causeways from the mainland and controlling the lake with armed brigantines. The supply of food to the city was cut and the aqueduct carrying water to the city was blocked, while Cortés made continued attacks on the capital, itself besieged by terrible disease. Weakened by lack of provisions and smallpox and dispirited by the constant attacks, Tenochtitlán fell in 1521 after eight months of siege.

Cortés had conquered Mexico in a mere 30 months and went on to rebuild Tenochtitlán as Mexico City; the land was rechristened New Spain. Cortés introduced Christianity and outlawed human sacrifices. Tenochtitlán was razed to the ground and the first buildings of modern-day Mexico City were laid down. Intent on winning the peace after the war, Cortés established a society where sexual union was a founding principle - he even married La Malinche, the woman who acted as translator for him shortly after his arrival in South America.

Hernán Cortés brought European attitudes and religion to the continent. His abilities to form political alliances, ruthless military brain and desperation for power brought about the end to one of the world's greatest civilisations, as well as the destruction of one of its most brilliant cities. More than any other person, Cortés birthed the modern-day Mexico. That this also brought about the fall of the Aztec civilisation mattered less to Cortés than the glorious plunder and power that his South American conquest provided.

A city paved with gold

Was the Aztec city as rich as legend depicts?

The vast majority of gold gifted to the Spanish was immediately melted down by conquistadors hungry for wealth and oblivious to the inherent value of the jewellery and ornaments created by the natives. Swiftly spirited out of the country, mercantilism and piracy probably meant that Aztec gold ended up in all corners of the globe. The amount of gold deposits in Mexico is also small, meaning the amount of gold looted by the Spaniards may have been exaggerated.

However, the Aztecs did not value gold - they called it "the excrement of the gods" - preferring to use it decoratively rather than as currency and were perturbed at the Spanish greed for it. Conceivably they were happy to give their reserves of gold to the Spaniards, not because it was so abundant, but because there was little significance attributed to it.

Ironically, it was possibly Moctezuma's use of gold as tributes to Cortés when the conquistadors landed that ensured Tenochtitlán's destruction. Rather than

satisfying Cortés, the gold only increased his desire for more of it.

In a letter to the Spanish king in July 1519, Cortés listed around 50 golden treasures and precious stones in the form of necklaces and decorative ornaments, one 'as big as a cartwheel', and a Spanish helmet filled with gold dust. However, Cortés sent only a fifth of his total bounty to Spain as a tribute, meaning the real figure was around 200-250 items. The raids on Tenochtitlán's stores of treasure must have yielded a lot more booty, but much was lost in the retreat from the city on La Noche Triste. The true value of Aztec gold is likely to remain a mystery.



Image source: Dreamstime

Helmet

PROTECTING THE CONQUISTADORS' HEADS IN STYLE

The iconic steel helmet of a conquistador had a notable crest on the top and curved sides. Most conquistadors favoured a simple helmet that covered only the top of the head, but others encased the majority of the head, leaving just a small gap for the wearer's eyes, nose and mouth.

Toledo Sword

SWORDS DIDN'T GET MUCH BETTER IN THE 1500S

Wealthier conquistadors made use of the finest swords of the 16th century. Made in the Spanish city of Toledo, the steel sword of the same name gave these soldiers a huge advantage over the natives of the New World thanks to its strength and resilience. Some cavalry would also carry lances.

Camisa

AS FIGHTING PETERED OUT, CONQUISTADORS GOT MORE CASUAL

Most conquistadors wore a basic long-sleeved shirt under their armour known as a camisa. Over time, when some conquistadors started to be revered as gods and hostilities lessened, they opted to wear the lighter camisa on most occasions as metal armour was no longer essential.

Cuerra

POORER SOLDIERS HAD TO MAKE DO WITH LEATHER OR COTTON

For their arms and legs, richer conquistadors had overlapping steel plates that allowed movement while also providing protection, but lower-ranking conquistadors just wore a cotton or leather jacket known as a guerra.

The anatomy of a conquistador

A soldier in the conquest of the New World, Spain, Portugal 16th century

Breastplate

STEEL SO STRONG IT MADE CONQUISTADORS ALMOST INVINCIBLE

Like their swords, the steel armour of conquistadors was made in Toledo. It left the soldier with very few vulnerabilities, and thus the primitive wooden weapons of the Aztecs and Incas were very ineffective. In fact, one conquistador could kill dozens of natives before losing his own life.

Jacqueta de Mala

WEALTH DETERMINED HOW ELABORATE YOUR ARMOUR WAS

Conquistadors were not a uniform army. Rather, they were adventurers who sought a fortune in the New World of America. Thus, many had contrasting armour; while the wealthiest could afford steel plating, the rest relied on any metal available – often a sleeveless chainmail vest called a jacqueta de mala.

Shield

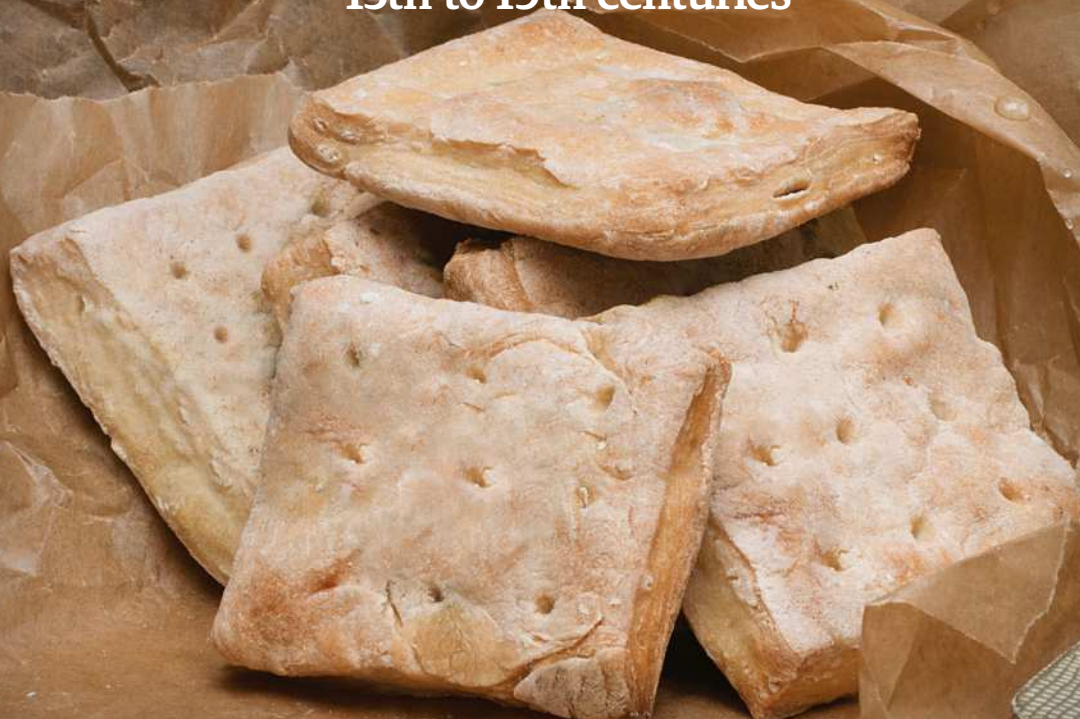
IF YOUR ENEMIES FIGHT WITH CLUBS, WOOD IS AS GOOD AS STEEL

Conquistador shields were mostly circular with a convex design in order to deflect blows. The strongest shields were made of metal, although – due to the nature of Aztec weapons – wooden shields were just as effective.



How to make... Hardtack

Long-life biscuit for explorers,
15th to 19th centuries



Voyagers have been creating biscuits that can be preserved since ancient times, but long-life rations really came into their own during the 15th century, when they were the primary foodstuff of explorers - although they often became contaminated with mould and insects! Hardtack remained popular until steam power superseded the age of sail.

Ingredients

- ✱ 3 cups of flour
- ✱ 2 cups of water
- ✱ 2 teaspoons of salt

Method

- 01** Preheat the oven to gas mark 5/190 degrees Celsius/375 degrees Fahrenheit. Prepare a flat baking tray or cookie sheet, but do not grease it. Next flour a chopping board or work surface.
- 02** Add the water and salt to a bowl and slowly sift in the flour, stirring with a palette or butter knife until the mixture thickens too much to stir.
- 03** Draw the dough together with your fingertips until it forms a rough ball shape. Turn out onto your floured surface and knead for five to ten minutes until the dough is firm but elastic.
- 04** Dust a rolling pin with flour and roll the dough out until it is around a centimetre thick. Give the dough a quarter-turn after every couple of rolls to keep the shape even and to prevent it from sticking to the surface.
- 05** Use a sharp knife or pizza cutter to trim the edges from your dough so it forms a square or rectangle. Divide the dough into smaller squares or rectangles; alternatively use a cookie cutter.
- 06** Using a cocktail stick or a skewer poke rows of evenly spaced holes into the dough.
- 07** Put the dough shapes onto your baking tray and cook for half an hour at gas mark 5/190 degrees Celsius/375 degrees Fahrenheit.
- 08** After 30 minutes, take the hardtack out from the oven, flip each cracker over and then bake for another half an hour.
- 09** Now remove from the oven and place on a wire rack, allowing the biscuits to cool completely before eating or storing them.
- 10** For less historically accurate (but better-tasting) hardtack, use soda water instead of ordinary water; it will make lighter, crisper crackers, but note this will also reduce their shelf life.

The explorer's vessel

On board a Spanish caravel

Climb aboard the nimble Spanish ships that sailed the Seven Seas

Names like Hernán Cortés and Christopher Columbus are synonymous with great expeditions, discovery and colonial expansion, and as such the vessels used to drive their exploration remain a fascinating piece of history. These were the caravels, or caravelas, of Spain and Portugal - small, nippy ships that were able to sail into the wind and, thanks to their shallow keel, could venture much closer to coastlines and even upriver. Despite their surprisingly diminutive nature, which limited the size of the crew and cargo, this didn't limit Iberian expansion and the establishment of a spice trade with Asia - that said, larger ships were later used for the actual trading. It was the sheer manoeuvrability of the caravel that made it such a popular craft, and with the extra difficulties that came with southward oceanic exploration, this much smaller ship was better equipped to deal with the strong winds, shoals and strong currents. Crewed by about 20-25 sailors, the caravel was based on fishing boats and used up to three masts

to enable it to sail closer to the wind, and with greater manoeuvrability. The large square mainsail combined with the lighter hull also made the caravel exceptionally fast, meaning it could outrun almost anything else on the sea at the time.

Such advantages compensated for the lack of cargo or crew space. The Portuguese developed a specialised fighting version of the caravel in the first half of the 16th century to act as an escort in Brazil to trade ships on the East Indies route. With a load capacity of between 50 and 200 tons the caravel wasn't well-suited to trading itself.

Having carried Christopher Columbus to the New World and Hernán Cortés to Mexico, the humble caravel will remain a key part of naval history for ever, and here we look at some of the key features of this ship that made it such a potent tool in the age of discovery. Though the conquistadors aboard had a huge part to play in the colonisation process, they would never have made it to the shores of the New World had it not been for these modest vessels.

How do we know this?

Having shaped a huge part of history on both sides of the Atlantic, and ferried some of the most iconic names in exploration, including Columbus and Cortés, the caravel has survived history thanks to a large number of commissioned replicas - some of which are still operational today - scattered around the world. Along with shipwrecks in the Bahamas and written accounts from crew, the replicas have enabled estimates to be made about caravel scale/layout. From these accounts we can build up a picture of what it was like to sail aboard such a ship, venturing to exotic climes back in the 15th century.



A replica of Boa Esperança, which can be found in the Portuguese city of Lagos

How a caravel sizes up

Caravel



Merchant ship



Oil tanker



01 Foresail

The most forward of the three sails, this backed up the mainsail in providing force to help propel the vessel.

02 Cross of the Order of Santiago

The Order of Santiago was an order of the Spanish army that fought for the Catholic kings, which also financed Columbus's expeditions.

03 Kitchen

Consisted of just a single burner because of the smaller crew; only one meal would have been prepared each day.

04 Hold

Though much smaller than its contemporaries, the hold on a caravel could still carry between 50 and 200 tons of cargo.

05 Protective varnish

A varnish was applied to make the hull of the ship smoother and more resistant to the elements.

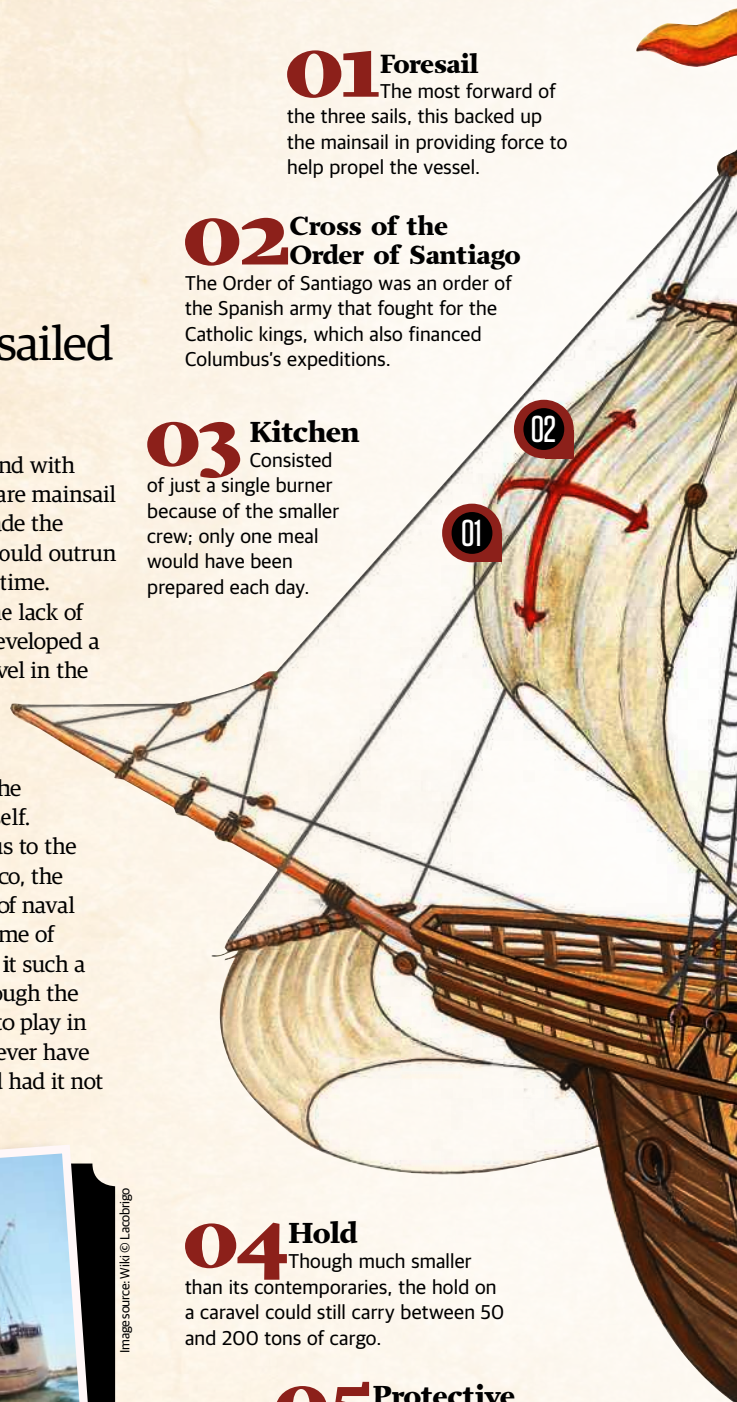


Image source: Wiki © Lacabriga

12

Mainsail

The driving force of the ship, this large square sail ensured it captured the wind and made the caravel one of the speediest vessels of its time.

11

Deck
There were no beds or bedrooms on board, so the crew would often sleep on the open deck.



10

Crow's nest
Here a sailor would be stationed to keep a lookout ahead, while also controlling the high sails and supervising any crew who might be slacking off.

09

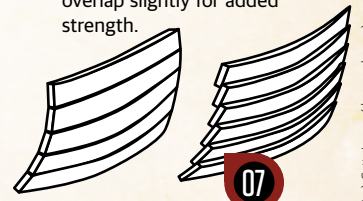
Mizzen sail
Complemented the mainsail and, thanks to its angle and triangular shape, it made the ship highly agile and manoeuvrable at sea.

08

Tiller
The steering wheel (helm) was yet to be invented, so this was used to move the rudder and steer the ship.

07

Hull structure
The hull of a caravel was built using horizontal strips of wood that stretched from bow to stern. These would sometimes overlap slightly for added strength.



06

Keel
One of the key advantages of the caravel was its smaller size, and as a result it had a much shallower keel, making close coastal and even upriver navigation possible.



Age of Discovery

Ferdinand Magellan

Around the world in 1,125 days

Chronicling the extraordinary, often misbegotten, bloody and brutal voyage of Ferdinand Magellan and the first recorded circumnavigation of the globe

— Written by Jonathan Gordon —





Ferdinand Magellan

Barrameda

Islands

Islands

Palauan

Brunei

Tidore

Ambon Island

Timor

Indian Ocean

Cape of Good Hope

Magellan



n 10 August 1519, five ships carrying 270 men known as the Armada de Molucca set out from Seville in search of a western route to the Spice Islands, now known as the Maluku Islands, in eastern Indonesia.

On 8 September 1522, a single ship returned to Seville from the armada with only 18 crew members having successfully circumnavigated the world. As this would suggest, the journey was not without its costs. Originally led by Portuguese

explorer Ferdinand Magellan, the journey was completed with Juan Sebastián Elcano at its head, with the Basque navigator promoted from Master to Captain General in the intervening years. Magellan had been killed; the crew had been decimated by illness, mutiny, conflict with local kingdoms and more. Here we'll break down the journey from beginning to end to chronicle the often bloody and vicious activities of both the armada and the peoples it encountered along the way.



A Clash of Superpowers

Dates: 10 August 1519 – 20 September 1519

Locations: Seville and Sanlúcar de Barrameda (Spain)

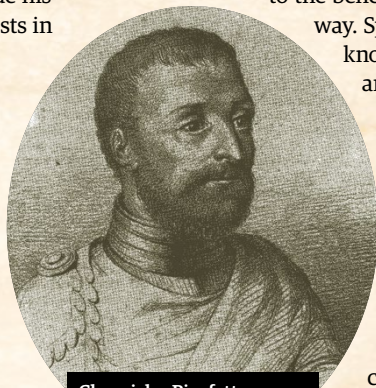
The search for a route through the New World that would connect the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean had long been the mission of Ferdinand Magellan. Having made his name in expeditions and conquests in Indonesia, he became convinced that a path to the region could be found that avoided the treacherous waters around the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. However, having fallen out of favour in his native Portugal and having his mission rejected by King Manuel I, he turned to his home nation's greatest imperial rival, Spain.

The recently crowned Charles I (soon to be elected Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V) was keen to back the expedition in the hopes of replenishing the royal coffers and making an early mark in the history books for his reign. So it was that the Portuguese explorer would forswear his

homeland and pledge allegiance to the king of Spain, promising to bring him riches in the form of spices from the East and forming alliances to the benefit of his kingdom along the way. Spanish expeditions were well known for their record keeping and it's thanks to these records, most particularly those made by Italian scholar Antonio Pigafetta, who was on Magellan's voyage, that we now know so much of what the armada faced, achieved and perpetrated.

Five ships were built in Seville – four carracks and one caravel, to journey west into the Pacific Ocean and path to the Spice Islands. They set off down the river from Seville to

Sanlúcar, stocked up and set off, just as Magellan's hero Christopher Columbus had done 20 years earlier on his third voyage to the New World.

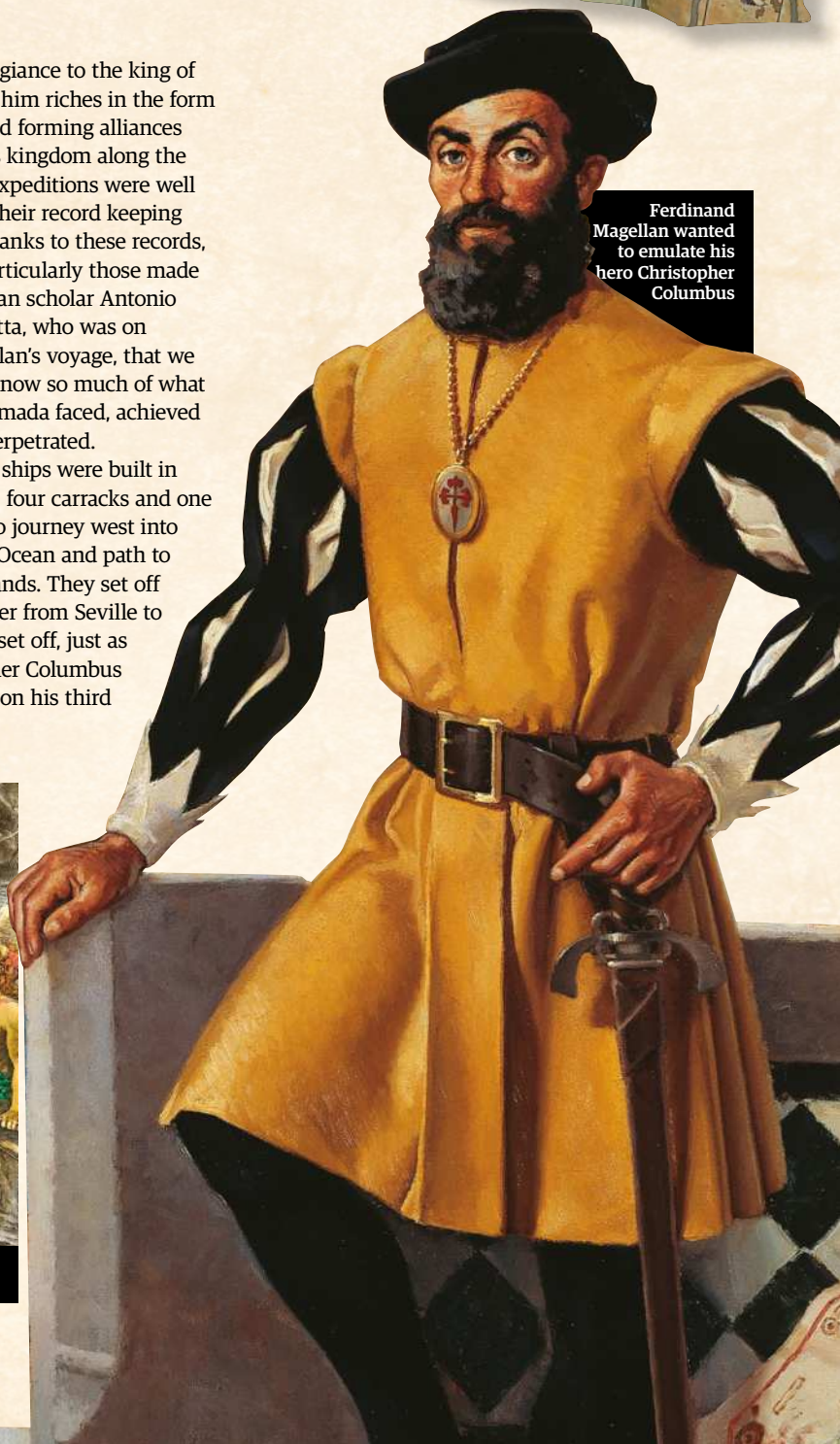


Chronicler Pigafetta was a Magellan loyalist through the voyage

Ferdinand Magellan wanted to emulate his hero Christopher Columbus



Allegory on the travels of Ferdinand Magellan by Theodor de Bry



Dark Origins

Dates: 26 September 1519

Locations: Canary Islands

The Casa de Contratación (House of Trade), which held jurisdiction on all expeditions out of Spain, didn't trust the Portuguese Magellan and positioned its own people among his crew. Juan de Cartagena, illegitimate son of the head of the Casa de Contratación, began to lead talk of mutiny very early on in their journey.

Magellan also got word that Manuel I had sent out a fleet to hunt down and arrest him. For the early part of the expedition the explorer would sail under the dual shadows of Spanish revolt and Portuguese revenge. His standing among the crew may not have been aided by his prosecution of boatswain Antonio Salamon on charges of sodomy with a cabin boy, Antonio Ginovés, for which he was sentenced to death by strangulation. Sodomy was illegal at the time, but such activities at sea were common and typically overlooked. A meeting afterwards saw Cartagena challenge Magellan's choice of route. Cartagena refused to take Magellan's commands henceforth, but his co-conspirators hesitated to support him and he was arrested and relieved of his command by Magellan.



The armada was regularly buffeted by storms as it attempted to cross the Atlantic

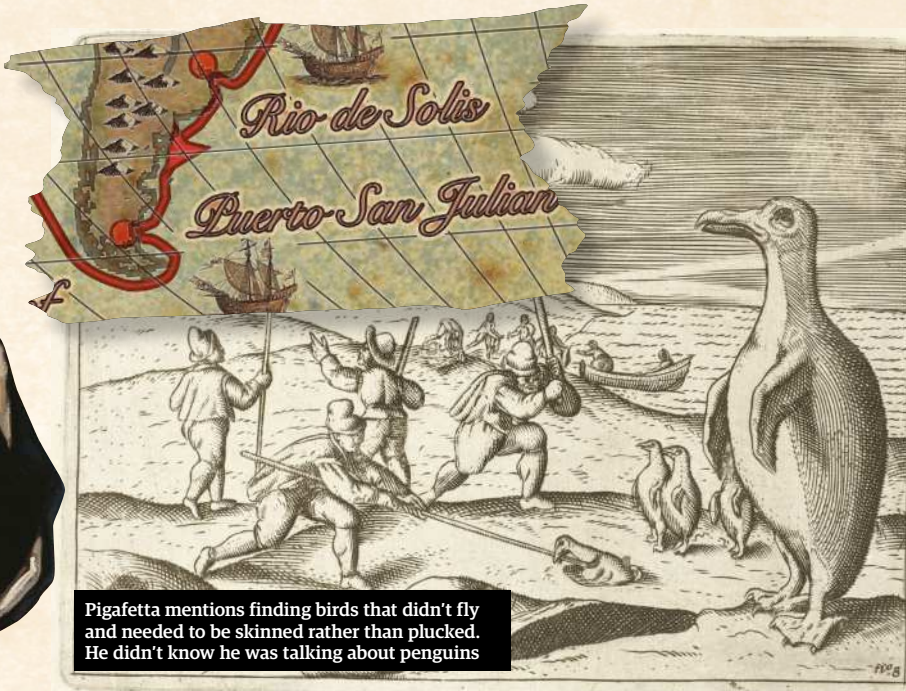
The Hunt for the Strait

Dates: 13 December 1519 – 31 March 1520

Locations: Rio de Janeiro Bay (Brazil), Puerto San Julian (Argentina)

Having finally turned west, away from the coast of Africa, the armada made its way across the Atlantic, finally reaching South America around late November. Arriving at Santa Lucia Bay, Rio de Janeiro, the local Guarani people welcomed the fleet. The armada had strict instructions regarding interactions with native peoples from Charles I himself. The crew was forbidden from sexual activity with women, firearms were not to be discharged and locals should be treated kindly. All rules would be broken in the coming months.

While they rested and re-stocked here for some time, the need to press forward became more urgent as they realised they didn't have enough supplies. Continuing down the coast of South America, they were battered by storms before finally seeking shelter in Puerto San Julian. The crew were put on rations, which likely increased discontent after a rather harrowing journey thus far. Still, having passed the equator, this location, abundant with fish, was chosen as a shelter for the winter to pass.



Pigafetta mentions finding birds that didn't fly and needed to be skinned rather than plucked. He didn't know he was talking about penguins

A World Divided

A quick guide to the Treaty of Tordesillas

What was the Treaty of Tordesillas?

This document divided up the globe in 1494 between the superpowers of the day, Spain and Portugal. The line of demarcation, or meridian, ran 370 leagues (1,200 miles) west of the Cape Verde islands. The intention of this document was to end disputes between the nations after the discovery of the New World.

What belonged to Portugal?

Everything east of the demarcation line was the domain of Portugal, which at this time was mainly concentrated around the Southern Atlantic and Indian Oceans, and Portugal was free to claim any lands it conquered there.

What belonged to Spain?

Spain had control of everything to the west of the demarcation line, which included much of the West Atlantic as well as all of North and Central America and most of South America. It was also assumed that anything further west was also Spain's, although this didn't take into account the spherical nature of the planet.

Were the Spice Islands in Spanish waters?

While Magellan's voyage proved that the Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines could be reached by travelling west and as such were west of the demarcation line, he also inadvertently proved they were within Portuguese territory (a fact that was somewhat disguised at the time). A new treaty had to be drawn up, the Treaty of Zaragoza, to determine an anti-meridian at which time Spain relinquished its claim over the Moluccas for 350,000 ducats (approx. £43 million by modern gold values).

The First Circumnavigator?

The life of Enrique of Malacca

Known as Enrique de Malaca in Spanish, Henrique de Malaca in Portuguese and Panglima Awang in Malay, the man most commonly known as Enrique of Malacca was taken as a slave by Ferdinand Magellan in one of his many visits to the Spice Islands around 1511, at the age of 14. He was the only slave aboard the Armada de Molucca and acted as a useful translator, predominantly in the Pacific isles once they had managed to find the Strait of Magellan.

Having travelled west with Magellan as a boy and returning from the east a decade later, it seems reasonable to state that Enrique rather than any of the rest of the crew of the armada was the first person to successfully circumnavigate the globe. He didn't do it by choice or as a free man, but he was an active part of the mission all the same.

After Magellan's death and the betrayal of his promise that Enrique would be freed should he die, Enrique conspired with the people of Cebu to gain his freedom by having the commanders of the fleet killed. What happened to him afterwards is unknown, but if he did travel home to Malacca, the 1,550-mile trip from Cebu would have completed the journey.

Mutiny and Discovery

Dates: 1 April – 28 November 1520

Locations: Puerto San Julian (Argentina), Strait Of Magellan (Chile)

Cartagena, although arrested for mutiny, had been given permission to walk freely aboard the Victoria, one of the larger of the five ships. He continued to be a lightning rod for rebellion among the crew. Once again accusing Magellan of recklessness, he was backed up by the captains of the Victoria, San Antonio and Concepcion, leaving Magellan with only two loyal ships out of five. Magellan attempted to take back control of the situation, sending loyal men to reclaim the Victoria, which led to its captain, Luis de Mendoza, being killed. With the balance of power shifted, Gaspar de Quesada, captain of the Concepcion was caught, while Cartagena surrendered.

In the subsequent trial Quesada was beheaded and his body drawn and quartered along with that of Mendoza. Cartagena was marooned at Puerto San Julian, along with a priest named Sanchez de Reina who was found guilty. Their lives were likely spared in anticipation of the fallout executing them might have had if the armada returned to Spain. Another 40 sailors were found guilty and demoted to menial work aboard the ships, including Master Elcano.

Despite winter being upon them, the need to find the strait remained dire so the small caravel, the Santiago, was sent out to explore the coast in July. While they found a better shelter in Santa Cruz, the ship ran aground on the journey back and was lost. Most if not all of the crew miraculously survived and two of them managed to walk for 11 days back to the armada to send a rescue party. The armada held in Santa Cruz but around 21 October, the Concepcion and San Antonio were swept into a bay that turned out to be a strait to the Pacific. The waterway was complex and at some point they lost sight of the San Antonio. Whether it accidentally lost the armada or was another mutiny is unclear, but the ship turned around and headed back to Spain. The other three reached the Pacific by 28 November.



While the ringleaders were killed or exiled, the other mutineers were spared



Now known as the Straits of Magellan, the armada simply called it the Patagonian Strait

Welcome to the Pacific

Dates: 6 March – 28 March 1521

Locations: Guam, Philippines

Having survived the choppy waters and intense storms of the southern Atlantic, the open ocean of the Pacific might have seemed like a relief save for the fact it was significantly more vast than anyone at the time imagined. The crew had greatly underestimated the supplies needed to cross it successfully and as a result outbreaks of scurvy (the result of a lack of vitamin C, usually found in fruit) killed at least 29 of the crew in the 98 days before their first landfall. This was already the furthest any expedition had been recorded travelling in history.

That first sighting of land would be Guam, where the Chamorro people aboard their own outrigger boats - proas - greeted the armada. These double-hulled boats were unknown to those on the Spanish ships. Unfortunately, this would be a contentious first encounter, as having a different concept of property, the Chamorro came aboard the ships and began taking any items they wanted. Confrontations followed, but some trading was finally established until Magellan's personal dinghy was taken, which he took as a personal

affront. Magellan ordered his men to burn their village in response, destroying 40-50 houses and killing seven men.

A change of approach appears to have been adopted in the following weeks as the crew landed at Suluan, Homonhon and Limasawa, with more caution and a newfound zeal for converting those they met to Christianity. By firing off their guns and with displays of their armour in mock battles, Magellan would often intimidate his hosts as a means of warning them off attack. The chronicler Pigafetta reports much more genial encounters for this stretch of the trip, with the king of Limasawa, Kolambu, even making a blood compact with Magellan. It was also here that Enrique de Malaca, a slave that Magellan had taken from the East in the years previous to this voyage, was able to speak with the locals in their native Malay. Assuming this was close to his original birthplace, this would make him the first circumnavigator having circled the world to return home, albeit having been stolen from there and then forced to travel back again.

The Death of Magellan

Dates: 7 April – 27 April 1521

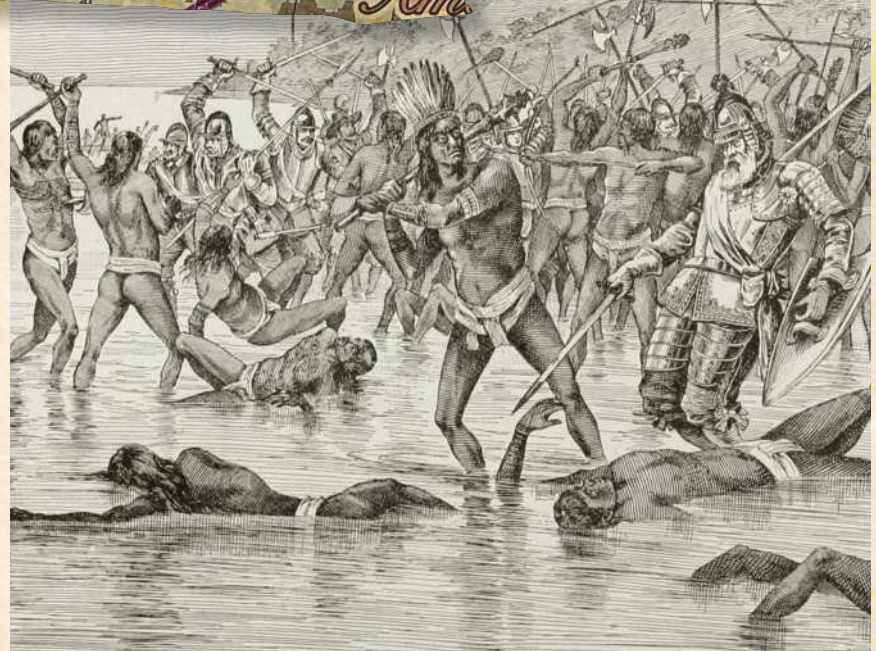
Locations: Cebu, Mactan

As the Armada de Molucca travelled it became both more adept at ingratiating itself with the local communities, but also more embroiled in the local politics. When it arrived at Cebu, Magellan met its leader Humabon and another blood pact was made. At this stage using a mixture of threats and generosity, Magellan's voyage was turning into something more akin to a crusade, and it's estimated he led the conversion of 2,200 Cebuans. However, in return for their hospitality Magellan promised to ally with Humabon against his enemies, which turned their attention to Mactan and its leader, Lapu-Lapu.

Magellan used Lapu-Lapu's refusal to convert as a pretext for conflict, but the crew of the armada pleaded that this was not the mission Charles I had sent them on. Ignoring this counsel, he led 60 armoured men to Mactan, accompanied by some Cebu warriors who were told only to observe and witness the fighting prowess of the Europeans. The landscape was not in their favour, however, as the tide was out, meaning a long distance between their landing boats and the tree line as well as their own fleet being out of range to support them. Lapu-Lapu, on the other hand, had 1,500 men to send against the foreign invaders and their overwhelming numbers and terrain meant the Europeans were roundly beaten. Aiming for the legs, which had little armour, the Mactanese used poison arrows, catching Magellan himself. As he commanded retreat the Cebu warriors came to the aid of his men, helping them reach their ships, but Magellan was cut down and left behind. So it was the Captain General of the Armada de Molucca was killed and Lapu-Lapu became a local hero, even to this day, for his resistance to foreign power.



Magellan was greatly outnumbered as he attempted to show off superior European armour and weapons at the Battle of Mactan



Images source: Getty, Alamy

A Bloody Banquet

Dates: 28 April – 1 May 1521

Locations: Cebu

With their Captain General dead on the beaches of Mactan, what remained of the crew elected new leadership, ending up with a co-captaincy shared between Portuguese and Spanish representatives. Magellan's brother-in-law Duarte Barbosa shared leadership with the Santiago's captain, Juan Rodriguez Serrano.

One of their first decisions as commanders would ultimately also contribute to their downfall. Magellan had left instructions that Enrique de Malaca, his slave of many years, should be freed upon his death, but Barbosa and Serrano refused to honour that directive. Presumably they wanted Enrique to continue translating for them as they navigated the rest of the Philippines towards Indonesia and Malaysia, but the way it's recorded is that they insisted he had to return to Spain and remain in the service of Magellan's widow, Beatriz Barbosa. Pigafetta reports that he refused to leave the ship, having been wounded in the battle alongside Magellan, but Barbosa threatened to have him flogged. Enrique didn't take long to seek his revenge and freedom.



As Pigafetta tells it, Enrique conversed with Humabon and explained that the king could capture all of the goods and treasures aboard the armada if they worked together. The newly elected captains were subsequently invited to a banquet by the local king. Thirty men, mostly officers, attended and as the meal came to a close, armed Cebuans surrounded them and attacked, killing 27. Having seen Magellan defeated by his local rival, Humabon's move, while duplicitous in its own right, could well have been an attempt to save face locally and maintain loyalty among his own people. Serrano was kept alive to be ransomed, but after the remaining crew, lead by João Lopes Carvalho, realised the Cebuans were just asking for more and more guns and the likely outcome was clear, they sailed away leaving their newly appointed captain behind, presumably to die.



A Crew Depleted

Dates: 2 May – 9 July 1521

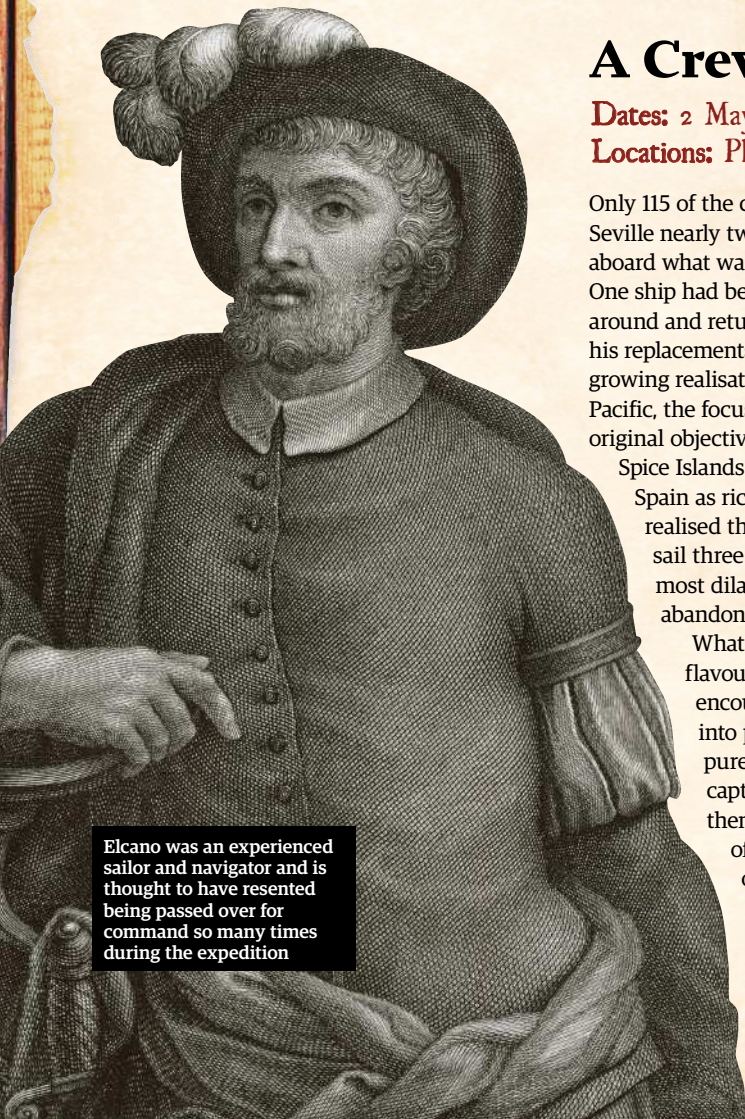
Locations: Philippines, Brunei, Spain

Only 115 of the crew who originally set out from Seville nearly two years previously were still aboard what was left of the Armada de Molucca. One ship had been lost at sea, the other turned around and returned to Spain. With Magellan and his replacements still recently deceased and the growing realisation of the brutality of life in the Pacific, the focus was placed firmly back on the original objective of this mission: to reach the Spice Islands, load up on cloves and return to Spain as rich men. However, they quickly realised they didn't have enough men to sail three ships and so the Concepcion, the most dilapidated and worm-infested, was abandoned and burned at sea.

What followed was a very different flavour of seafaring, with violent encounters with local boats descending into piracy and all other landings being purely transactional. Local pilots were captured from other ships to help them navigate the complex series of islands, often taking them in opposite directions to their own home ports, although this did allow for continued stocking up of crucial supplies.



Meanwhile there was still one more armada ship at sea and it finally arrived back in Seville on 6 May 1521. The San Antonio, which had lost contact with the rest of the fleet, on purpose or otherwise, had been sailing alone for over six months, had no knowledge of what had become of their comrades, but did know that the strait to the Pacific had been found. Despite this discovery, the crew appears to have wasted no time in recounting the brutal leadership of Magellan, accusing him of betraying or plotting to betray Spain for his native Portugal and justifying their roles, where applicable, in the mutinies among the ships. Their words seem to have had an impact as Magellan's family were placed under house arrest as a result.



Elcano was an experienced sailor and navigator and is thought to have resented being passed over for command so many times during the expedition



The signing of the Treaty of Tordesillas between Spain and Portugal, 7 June 1494

The Spice Islands

Dates: 21 September 1521 – 6 April 1522

Locations: Brunei, Malacca

Carvalho's time in leadership was a contentious period, with more confrontations and challenges to his leadership from an increasingly weary and disgruntled crew. During their stops he had taken aboard prisoners to present to Charles I, among them three women who he then kept as his personal harem aboard the Trinidad. Unsurprisingly, this didn't go over well with the crew. Previously, Magellan had permitted no slaves, except for Enrique, to be aboard the armada, and no women either. Carvalho was asked to step down, replaced by Martin Mendez, with Gonzalo de Espinosa captaining the Trinidad and Juan Sebastián Elcano leading the Victoria. As the only experienced navigator, Elcano held the most sway going forward.

It was under his guidance that the armada finally reached the Moluccas around 8 November 1521 where they were welcomed by local leader Al-Mansur. He had his own reasons for inviting new foreign trade since he refused to submit to Portuguese demands for a monopoly in the region. It was also here that the rest of the crew learned the Portuguese had been looking for them since they left



Spain two years ago. A trading post was established and the two remaining ships were loaded up with as many goods as they could hold, mostly cloves. However, as the ships prepared to depart in December the Trinidad began taking on water. It was decided that half the crew would remain with the flagship while it was repaired and the Victoria would sail alone back to Spain heading west. The Trinidad, meanwhile, would head east, when ready, to the Americas and seek transport over land for its cargo before returning to Spain via the Atlantic.

However, when the Trinidad finally did begin its journey it was caught in more storms, its crew afflicted with scurvy and 30 men were lost. Turning back to Tidore, they found the Portuguese there waiting for them. The Trinidad was stripped and left to be torn apart by storms.

One Ship Returns

Dates: 21 December 1521
– 8 September 1522

Locations: The Moluccas, Cape of Good Hope, Seville

Juan Sebastián Elcano headed out into the Indian Ocean aiming to round the Cape of Good Hope and return to Spain. It was a risky journey, but no other options were available. Many of the crew refused to make the journey and chose instead to wait on the Trinidad, which didn't turn out so well either. Sixty-three men remained on the Victoria, which was in a state of some disrepair. Whatever noble purpose the Armada de Molucca had set out with had long since been set aside. This was now about survival, about getting home.

The long journey west would see them hit the Cape around 6 May, although due to storms and the dangers of safely navigating these waters it took until 22 May to safely reach the western coast of the continent. In that time, unable to resupply, scurvy had once again struck the crew and 21 men lost their lives.

They stopped at Cape Verde islands, which was Portuguese controlled. Finally having had enough of the Victoria, many of the crew appear to have requested asylum with Portugal by revealing the ship's mission, only then to be held prisoner. So it



A parade in honour of Magellan in Spain after what was left of his crew returned

was that only 22 remained when Victoria left the island on 15 July, unwilling to give up the ship to bail out their crewmates.

Finally, on 6 September 1522, the Victoria arrived at Sanlúcar and then went a little further to Seville on 8 September. The ship was in such bad shape the crew was still pumping water out of the hull as it moved up the river. Only 18 crew members still remained and while the expedition still managed to turn a profit with the cargo of just one ship, the crew still did penance, having been

chastened and humbled by their experience. They had travelled 37,560 miles and proved the world to be both round and much larger than was thought. They had dispelled the common seafaring myths of mermaids and boiling oceans, but had found storms and human cruelty equally as terrifying. Still they came home rich and Elcano, having completed the journey that Magellan started, received a knighthood, pension and royal pardon for his part in the mutiny as well as having his name go down in history.





ASIA

This great continent, rich in resources and culture, had already been making waves. From Chinese traders to European sailors, find out how everyone wanted to profit from Asia's vast wealth





Unlocking the World

Vasco da Gama

Vasco da Gama's 1497 voyage from Lisbon to India, via the Cape of Good Hope, changed the world and dispelled centuries-old myths



he backdrop to Vasco da Gama's historic journey to India in 1497 is fascinating. Little Portugal, the small nation on the very edge of the Iberian Peninsula, situated as if cast out to the outer fringes of Western Europe - both literally and figuratively - would go on to change the course of world history with their experimental 15th century voyages down the coast of west Africa and eventually around the Cape of Good Hope (they originally named it 'Cape of Storms').

The country was ruthlessly ambitious, thanks to a succession of monarchs who believed very much in their own manifest destinies and sense of awesomeness. Portugal was also locked in a rivalry with its wealthier neighbour, Spain. The race to build an empire intensified when Italian explorer Christopher Columbus - whom they'd turned away previously when he asked them to support a venture - sailed into port one day with news he'd discovered a route west to the Indies (he'd discovered the Caribbean). It was time for them to get serious. Yet Portugal's progression as a seafaring powerhouse had been taken in incremental steps. Throughout the 15th century, they made a series of key discoveries - navigational and geographic - and Lisbon became a multicultural hub. Astronomers, cartographers, mathematicians and merchants were all flocking to the exciting city.

With the North Atlantic right on their doorstep, Portugal's geographic location, even if they felt

isolated from larger events in Europe at the time, became a positive. From 1415 onwards, first under the auspice of Prince Henry (known as Henry the Navigator), Portugal found and named the Azores and the Cape Verde Islands. These places served as bases for further explorations into the high seas. The Portuguese were expert sailors and master boat builders, too. These jaunts into points unknown were usually made in two or three caravels (small and nimble vessels with

triangular lateen sails) and they became focused on searching for a way to the Indies (meaning India and the Indian Ocean) via Africa.

For decades, the Portuguese had made their way down Africa's coastline, planting stone pillars as markers along headlands, all the while in search of a passage to the other side of the continent. They sailed down the Senegal River, the Congo River and other exotic locations until they could travel no further. By the end of the 15th century, they



Da Gama granted an audience with King of Calicut. They attempted to pay tribute with goods, the king wasn't impressed

Defining moment

Beginning the journey

On the eve of departure, Gama and his fellow voyagers proceeded down to the beach and point of departure by candlelight, priests and monks chanting as they went. The gathered crowd wept and family members waded into the water to bid adieu. Confession was taken and the crew was taken in small boats to the awaiting ships.

8 July 1497

VASCO DA GAMA

C. 1460-1524

Born in Sines, south west Portugal, Vasco da Gama's expeditions to India were part of his homeland's expansionist, empire-building plans. For his successful endeavours, he was appointed Viceroy of India. He died in the port city of Cochin (Kochi), after contracting malaria, three months upon arrival, on 24 December 1524.

The pilgrim incident

Vasco da Gama's aggressive tactics led to an infamous act of barbarism. On his second voyage to India in 1502, this time pumped up by honours bestowed upon him by the King of Portugal, he was up for a fight.

Gama's virulent anti-Muslim sentiment was born of a general hatred of Muslims by Christians. He considered that rule by fear and the sword was the best policy to subjugate people. Boats carrying pilgrims to Mecca and back were considered fair game for plunder.

On 29 September 1502, pilgrim vessel, *Miri*, came into view. Returning from the Red Sea with hundreds of men, women and children, Gama ordered an attack for reasons only known to him. At first *Miri's* crew and passengers put up no resistance. They assumed - quite wrongly - negotiation was on the cards.

Disabling the ship, Gama let it drift for five days before locking passengers inside, sealing all exits, setting the ship on fire and then watching in perverse pleasure as they all burned to death. He captured 20 children and ordered them to convert to Christianity. This monstrousness mystified and repulsed da Gama's crew.



Vasco da Gama could be a cruel man and wasn't above robbing traders or Muslim pilgrims when the mood took him

Image source: Getty Images

still hadn't found a way west to east Africa. On one trip, they reached as far as Angola and planted a marker with these words: "In the era of 6681 years from the creation of the world, 1482 years since the birth of our Lord Jesus, the most High and Excellent and Mighty Prince, King D João II of Portugal, sent Diogo Cão squire of his House to discover this land and plant these pillars."

In 1488, Bartolomeu Dias and his crew sailed further than any man had gone before. They rounded the Cape of Good Hope before turning back (they were too scared and weak to carry on). Having proved there was very possibly a sea route to the Indian Ocean via Africa, there wasn't a mad rush. It would be nine years before the next flotilla took off.

Since the Middle Ages, there had been stories of a Christian king who lived in Africa named 'Prester John' (John the Priest). The Ethiopian kings, who were Christians, fed into the Prester John figure of mythology. A major factor in Portuguese designs on the Indian Ocean was religious: they hated Islam and Muslims. Unlike their neighbours to the east, they'd kicked out the Moors as a presence in their land earlier. They also believed that, in building an alliance with Prester John, they could dominate trade and take it away from the Muslims. It was as much ideological as it was economical.

A vital event in the lead up to da Gama's mission was the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494). Mediated by Pope Alexander VI, the treaty essentially split the

"His inability to read other people and their motives led to misunderstandings"

known world in two. The Spanish got everything to the west and the Portuguese everything to the east and south. The meridian line demarked in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean was a complicated affair, as it distinguished in leagues and not degrees (but it meant the Portuguese could claim Brazil when they accidentally discovered it in 1500, when Capitão-mor (captain-major) Pedro Álvares Cabral came across it when performing the 'volta da mar' (turning of the sea) manoeuvre on his voyage to, you guessed it, India.

The Portuguese built deep-hulled vessels not ideal for exploration purposes, so when Vasco da Gama set off on his trip to discover the sea route to India on 8 July 1497, three smaller boats were used in addition to a supply ship. da Gama captained *São Gabriel*, a carrack. His brother, Paulo da Gama, commanded *São Rafael*. A caravel, *Berrio*, was the smallest of the trio, and was captained by Nicolau Coelho.

Vasco da Gama's selection to lead the mission is obscured by history. It looks, though, as if he was the second choice. King Manuel asked his brother, Paulo, to make the journey, but declined due to ill health. While Paulo wouldn't command the flotilla, he did join it. da Gama, a minor nobleman

from Sines, must have had extensive seafaring knowledge and experience to be appointed the captain-major. A hard personality with a violent temper - he'd keep the crew in check - such attributes must have come into play. This was a job for a tough guy. Yet da Gama's propensity for foul moods and errors in judgement led to massacres, reprise killings and mayhem, once Portugal got their hooks into Indian Ocean trade.

Summer 1497, the ships made for the Cape Verde Islands in favourable winds and landed 14 days later. From there, they sailed south west and used the same volta do mar navigational technique as Dias. It took them three days to edge down the coast and tackle the Cape. There were several occasions, too, where they met natives, some wary, some friendly. Beyond them now lay terra incognita. Da Gama named the coastal region 'Natal' having passed it on Christmas Day 1497.

At Mozambique, they discovered Arab ships, traders, and were amazed to meet Arabs who could speak Castilian. The world they sailed into

Defining moment Bold seafaring

After leaving the Cape Verde Islands, the flotilla pull a manoeuvre which has gone down in history. Instead of following the west African coast, they swing out into the southern Atlantic to catch the winds and hopefully round the Cape of Good Hope into the Indian Ocean. 93 days later, they sighted land, just north of the Cape itself.

August 1497



The tomb of Vasco da Gama at the Church of Santa Engrácia in Lisbon, Portugal

Image source: Wiki



An artist's depiction of the armada of ships leaving Portugal, waved off by crowds and King João II

was much more forward-thinking than Europe. The seas served as gateways to nations. Multiculturalism and social interactions thrived. It wasn't a paradise - far from it - there were warring sultans and rivalries, but the trade network between coastal cities and continents (Africa and Asia) was sophisticated compared to Europe. It wasn't too long, either, that da Gama noticed how their ships were weakened by lack of proper defences. They were, therefore, ripe for the taking.

Vasco da Gama's deeply suspicious nature and propensity to aggression set the standard for nearly all subsequent dealings with people he met. The captain-major acted cautiously always, but his inability to read other people and their motives led to misunderstandings, discourteous behaviour and often carnage. He tortured locals for information, took hostages and survived several skirmishes with tribesmen. On one occasion, their paranoia was justified. The Portuguese found a group of men attempting to board the ship in the dead of night. It is during this time, too, that da Gama met 'tawny men' he took to be Christians (they were Hindus).

Defining moment First sight of India

Over 300 days after leaving Lisbon and having made stops along the east African coast, da Gama's flotilla crossed the Indian Ocean with a Muslim pilot they'd captured. They arrived in monsoon season. As they passed through fog and heavy cloud, the Portuguese explorer and his crew spied high mountains. They were in India.

18 May 1498

Peak insolence was evident in the series of frustrating meetings with the samudri of Calicut, whom they met having finally crossed the Indian Ocean to India. da Gama disobeyed local customs; tax customs in port; refused to leave the ship because he feared Muslim traders were conspiring against him (he was right on that score); demanded an audience with the samudri on his terms alone; offered gifts (shirts, trinkets) the samudri found insulting and which his courtiers laughed at; and finally sailed away with an armada of Muslim ships hot on his tail. History was made, friends were not.

The Portuguese seized the Indian Ocean, thanks to Vasco da Gama's voyage. Like a threat made in a fit of anger, da Gama promised the Indians he'd be back. Revenge and subjugation on the cards. He was right about that, too. Portugal became the first globe-spanning maritime empire and managed to pip their neighbours Spain to the spice trade in the east. The world would never be the same again. The age of global business and European dominance of faraway foreign lands - colonialism - had well and truly begun.



Vasco da Gama lands at Calicut. This historic sea voyage would change the world forever

Time Traveller's Handbook

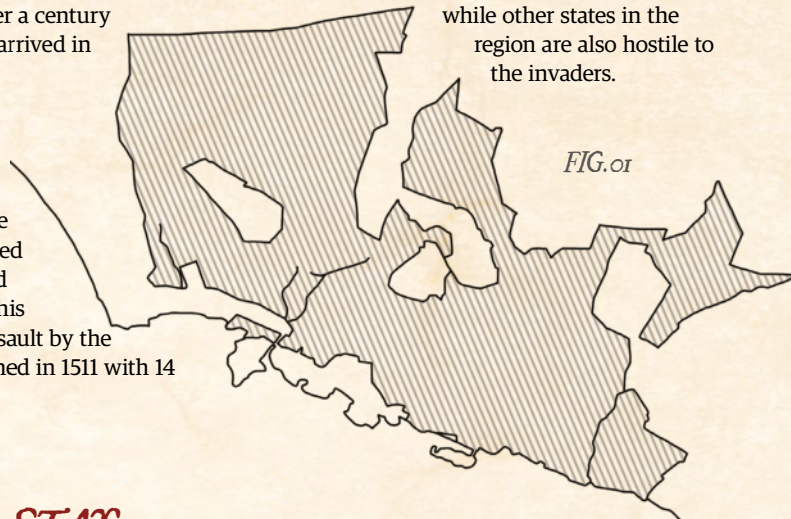
Portuguese Malacca

Located halfway between China and India, and with easy access to the bountiful spice islands of Indonesia, the city of Malacca in Malaysia was an epicentre for Asian trade in the 15th century. Its bustling port welcomed merchant ships from Arabia, Persia, China, Ceylon, India, Japan and more for over a century before the Portuguese arrived in the city in 1509.

Despite an initial warm welcome, Sultan Mahmud Shah was soon convinced that Europeans were a grave threat and so he attacked their fleet and captured several of their men. This prompted an all-out assault by the Portuguese, who returned in 1511 with 14

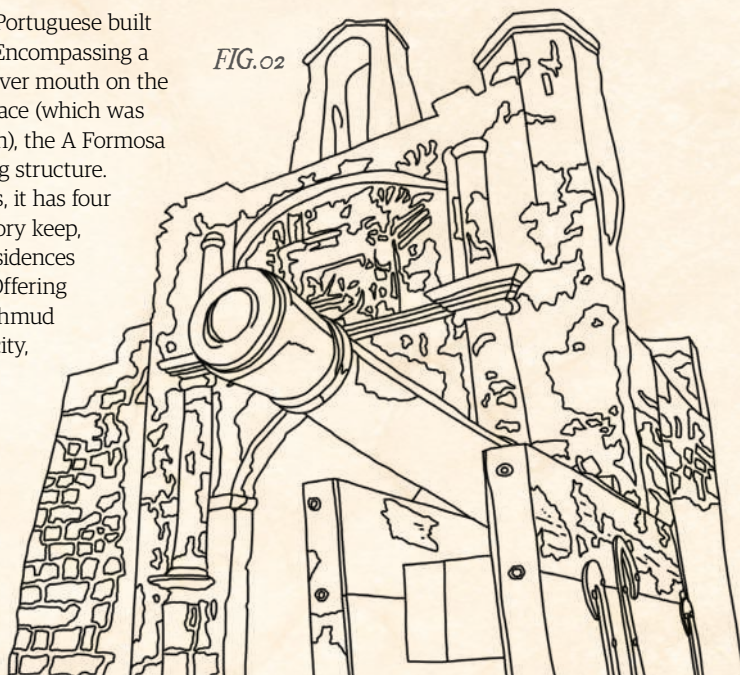
ships and 1,200 men. They besieged the city and conquered it in 40 days.

The Portuguese now control the port, but are fast learning that they don't control the Asian trade centred there. Many merchants are moving to safer harbours as Mahmud, having re-established his kingdom in Johor, is promising to retake the city, while other states in the region are also hostile to the invaders.



WHERE TO STAY

As soon as they arrived, the Portuguese built a fortress to defend the city. Encompassing a hill on the southeast of the river mouth on the former site of the sultan's palace (which was destroyed during the invasion), the A Formosa ('The Famous') is an imposing structure. Surrounded by long ramparts, it has four towers that serve as a four-story keep, an ammunition room and residences for the captain and officers. Offering the best protection when Mahmud and other raiders attack the city, the Portuguese have also built their administrative buildings, hospitals, churches and a cluster of townhouses within its walls. For more of a taste of Malaccan life, the A Formosa is also within walking distance of the city's local bazaar and oldest mosque.



DOS & DON'TS

✓ Be prepared to run to safety. Portuguese Malacca faces severe hostility and years of seemingly endless battles by those who wish to claim it.

✓ Comply with the Portuguese. They show fairness to those who obey them. For example, when the city was taken they sacked the town but left the property of those who sided with them.

✓ Know where to find a bride. The Portuguese have sent over many órfãs d'el-rei ('orphans of the king') – young women whose fathers have died in battle so are cared for by the state but have been sent to marry colonial settlers.

✓ Get to know the city. It has four main gateways that link to the different suburbs, but only two are in common use.

✗ Expect abundant trade. Because of competition from other ports, Asian merchants are bypassing Malacca and trade is slowly drying up.

✗ Stick around too long. In 1641, the Dutch will finally wrestle Malacca out of Portuguese hands after years of bitter fighting for control.

✗ Stay in the central suburb. Yler is the site of the central water source and Sabba is the rural home of the Muslim Malays where they make distilled wine.

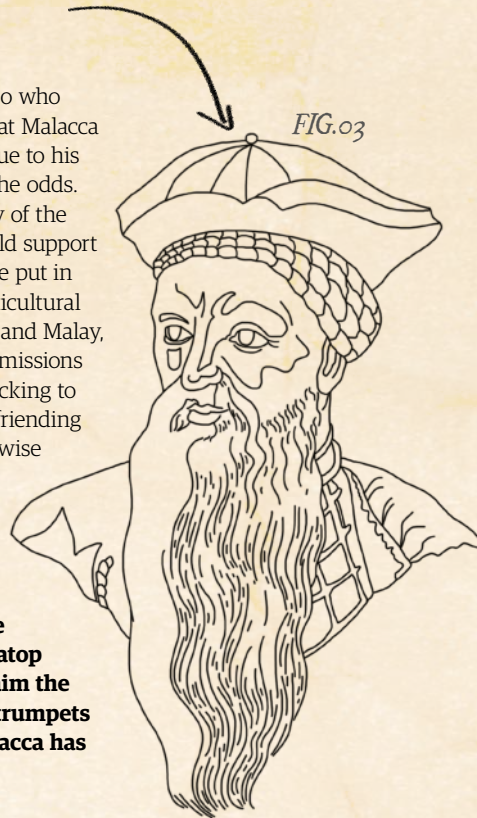
✗ Be fooled by appearances. Although Malacca is a wealthy city, most of the buildings are built from wood, with few exceptions.

WHO TO BEFRIEND

Alfonso de Albuquerque

A legendary empire builder, it was Alfonso who sailed brazenly into the port declaring that Malacca belonged to the Portuguese, and it was due to his military genius that the city fell against the odds. Alfonso quickly realised the unpopularity of the sultan and ensured that the citizens would support the Portuguese settlers. Once in power, he put in place representatives of all the city's multicultural communities, including Hindu, Javanese and Malay, and also set about organising diplomacy missions to obtain allies. With powerful figures flocking to his support, such as the king of Siam, befriending this popular and canny man would be a wise choice for the time traveller.

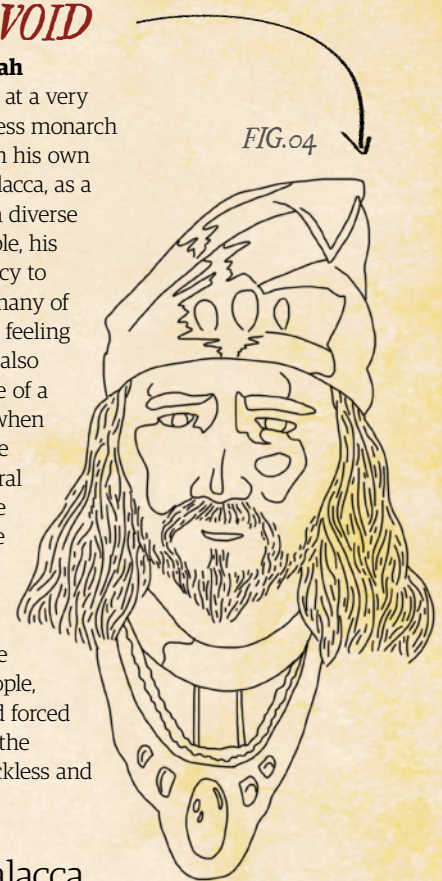
Extra tip: One event you don't want to miss is the parade celebrating the new currency of the city. Bowls filled with the new silver coins will be thrown down to the population from atop 11 elephants, while heralds will proclaim the new laws. Along with troops playing trumpets and drums, it will be a scene that Malacca has never seen the like of before.



WHO TO AVOID

Sultan Mahmud Shah

Inheriting the throne at a very young age, this ruthless monarch was out of touch with his own people. Although Malacca, as a bustling port city, is a diverse area of different people, his government's tendency to favour Muslims left many of his merchants with a feeling of dissatisfaction. He also destroyed any chance of a Portuguese alliance when he tried to assassinate the Portuguese admiral visiting the city. Since escaping Malacca, the sultan has already made several unsuccessful attempts to retake the city. Hated by his people, defeated in battle and forced to flee his own land, the sultan would be a reckless and burdensome ally.



Helpful skills

The Portuguese have grand plans for Malacca, and with these skills you can be part of them



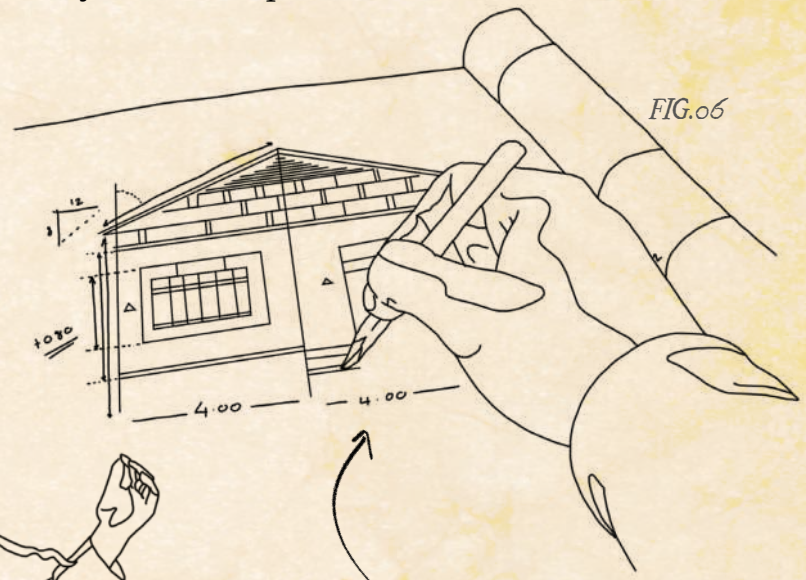
COMBAT

The Portuguese will face constant threats to their hold on Malacca from Malay sultans and the Dutch, and so they will need skilled sailors and soldiers to defend the city.



DIPLOMACY

Alfonso immediately realised that keeping a hold on a city so far from Portugal would greatly depend on the support of locals and building alliances with neighbouring nations, so natural tact is a must.



CIVIL ENGINEERING

The building and expansion of A Famosa is a huge undertaking for the Portuguese wishing to protect the city. Having the know-how to build it stronger and better will make you very valuable.



A crucial detail about Albuquerque's exploits in the Indian Ocean was his advanced age. Hardly in the prime of his youth, he carried out his duty until his death in 1515



Portugal's naval warrior

Alfonso de Albuquerque

An ambitious strategist and a ruthless crusader, Albuquerque set out to establish an ocean-spanning empire in the name of his king

— Written by Miguel Miranda —



Ever since the North African exclave of Ceuta fell to the armies of King John I in 1415, the tiny kingdom of Portugal nurtured ambitions far beyond its limited geography.

Under the guidance of Dom

Henrique (or Prince Henry the Navigator in the Anglophone world), naval expertise and a zealous push against the Moors (the Muslim kingdoms in Africa) combined into a unified national strategy. Portuguese captains, who were recruited from aristocratic families and trained in Henry the Navigator's nautical school in Sagres, explored the length of West Africa with great success.

Commanding 24 armed carracks, Vasco da Gama launched the next stage of Portugal's maritime foreign policy. Between 1500 and 1504, his navy disrupted the trade route between South Asia and the Middle East and rolled back the Mamelukes (who ruled Egypt) in the Red Sea. This wasn't done by economic competition but open warfare, often with horrific outcomes, like when the Portuguese set a ship full of Muslim pilgrims on fire. But time was not on their side. To carry out the work of empire-building it fell on Francisco de Almeida, another aristocratic mariner, whose main task was enlarging Portugal's role in the Indian Ocean spice trade by any means. But Almeida, the Viceroy of India, had neither the riches nor the manpower

to decide matters on the subcontinent. Indeed, Portugal could barely send 2,000 of its own men for this immense project and its shipyards could not produce carracks fast enough.

When admirals Tristão de Cunha and Alfonso de Albuquerque set out to aid the Viceroy in 1507, they only had six ships between them, with incomplete strategic knowledge of their adversaries. But what they lacked in numbers they more than compensated for with experience and ruthlessness. Albuquerque had spent the early 1500s in Asia learning all about the Indian Ocean's trade patterns, and, upon returning to Lisbon in 1505, he'd helped put together an aggressive strategy for King Manuel I that, in his view, would expand on Vasco da Gama's earlier accomplishments and cement Portuguese economic power in Asia. Albuquerque's military background was formidable, and in his old age he was entrusted to pursue an undeclared crusade on the high seas. This was apparent on his first attempt to seize Ormuz, known today as Hormuz, in 1507 to annex the fortified town at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. Vastly outnumbered, with the local sultan's hundreds of galleys blocking their way, he ordered his ships to engage the Moors and compel a negotiated settlement. The plan worked but the threat of an invasion by the vengeful sultan and the ebbing morale among his men forced him to abandon the venture.

Undaunted, Albuquerque's next objective was the Red Sea and the port of Aden, but with his own captains deserting and supplies running low, the single recourse was hiding in the island of Socotra for replenishment. Portraits of Albuquerque present a gentle old man - they fail to convey the fighting spirit and ferocity of a 53-year-old warrior who joined his own men in pitiless slaughter. His sense of justice inspired as much dread. When trying to save Portuguese-held Calicut from an uprising in 1510, he punished deserters among the ranks by having them blinded and their hands severed. Indeed, as the years wore on, Albuquerque's methods became more extreme.



The Portuguese carrack, or nau, became the terror of the Indian Ocean. Here's a replica of Albuquerque's flagship, the *Flor de la Mar*, that led the assault on Malacca in 1511

Image source: Raj Singh / Alamy Stock Photo



With Malacca now a tourist spot in Malaysia, the last vestiges of its early colonial past are ruins, like this abandoned Portuguese fort

The Spice Islands

Imagine four small, verdant islands in Southeast Asia being the only source of a valuable commodity for almost a millennium. Although the volcanic soil of Bacan, Jailolo, Ternate and Tidore was unfit for large-scale agriculture, aromatic cloves thrived, and once the nearby sea routes were protected whoever held these Spice Islands could reap unimaginable profits by selling dried clove flowers in bulk.

The spread of Islam over the region that began at some point in the 15th century created the vital linkage extending to the Malay Peninsula until the Indian coast and, finally, the eastern Mediterranean, where spice cargoes landed in Venice. The stranglehold maintained by Venice on imported spices is one of the factors that spurred Spain and Portugal's push for expeditions to India and beyond.

The first European to reach Ternate was a Portuguese soldier, who arrived soon after the fall of Malacca. Successive attempts that followed, including the failed Magellan expedition, spurred colonialism and chipped away at the islands' independence. Alfonso de Albuquerque also sent an expedition, just after he conquered Malacca. The local dynasties who governed the islands could not resist later pressure from the Dutch and Spanish, and their once-proud rulers suffered the ultimate disgrace - becoming vassals to foreign overlords. With the transfer of clove production to the Indian Ocean, the economic significance of the Spice Islands disappeared by the early 18th century.



This was apparent in 1510, when he sought to capture Goa, an island that offered direct links to the Arabian Sea. For more than a decade, Calicut and later Cochin had hosted Portuguese factories and forts. There were never more than a few thousand Portuguese between them, however, and this was a glaring weakness. At the time India was not a unified country under a single government but a patchwork of kingdoms, so warfare between Hindu and Muslim rulers was almost constant. With the immense wealth that poured in from Arabia, Persia, China and the Spice Islands, having control over port cities entailed great risks. Exploiting these circumstances to protect their hard-won gains meant the Portuguese curried favour with local rulers. But with ever-larger armies intent on wresting Calicut away, finding a new base was vital. With less than a thousand men, Albuquerque besieged Goa, and oversaw its capitulation in just one month.

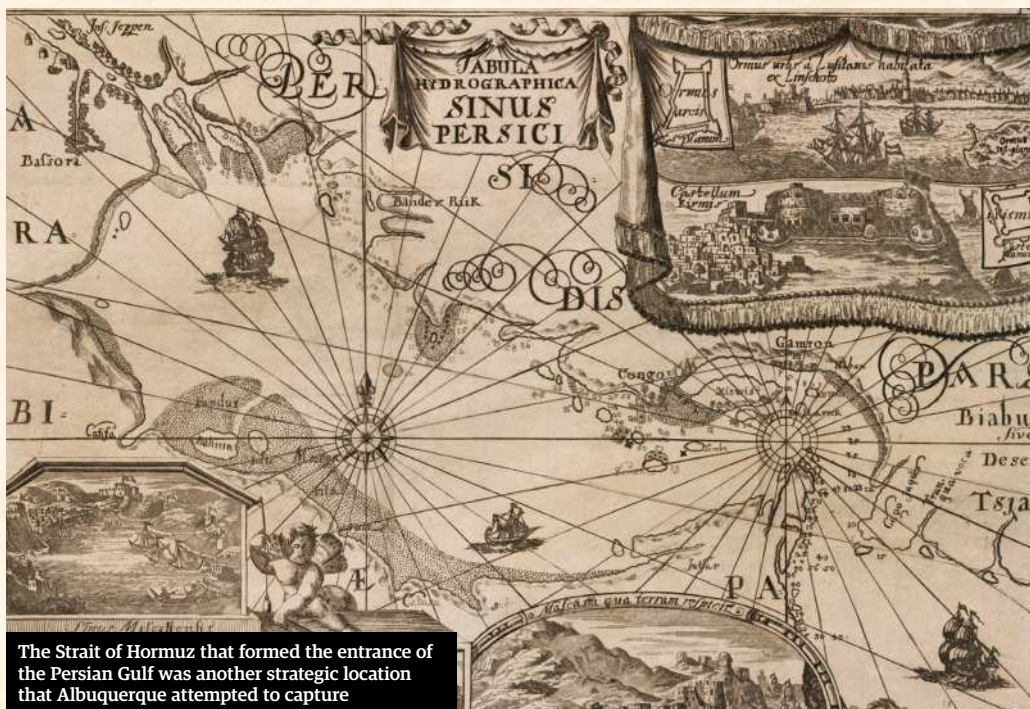
The victories won by the Portuguese in Asia at the time appear too heroic, with their men at arms always facing great odds, yet there were contextual factors working in their favour. An obvious one was having local allies who were promised generous material rewards, such as loot and certain privileges. In Goa, for example, the Hindus were responsible for turning the tide and overthrowing the local sultan. The effect of European firearms and artillery, on the other hand, seems to be surprisingly less prominent in these circumstances. Accounts of battles involving European and Muslim navies in the 16th century make it clear the latter had cannon and mortars on their ships, so one shouldn't assume the Portuguese had a technological advantage. Portugal's naval prowess at the time owed as much to borrowing or imitating Muslim maritime technology as continuous innovation - the cross-pollination of

knowledge and skills proved the Asian nations who clashed with the Europeans were not 'backward'.

But the Portuguese fighting spirit did produce remarkable gains. It was the inhabitants of Goa (still ruled by Sultan Ismail Adil Khan) who suffered the consequences firsthand. Having taken the city, a massacre ensued, where the Portuguese killed as many of the Muslim inhabitants as they could and divided their possessions - including women and children. This heinous outcome was not exceptional. During his attempt to keep Ormuz from an invasion years earlier, Albuquerque took hundreds of women hostage in his flagship - their fate was never ascertained.

But Goa was not put to the torch. In the span of months, Albuquerque reorganised its affairs and established a citadel for its defence. The grunt work of administration, from setting taxes and granting licences for business, was hastened so that revenue from the movement of goods could be collected at once. A local mint employing Indian craftsmen has lived on as proof of Albuquerque's governing acumen. It was not his job to act as governor of a faraway province, but he did anyway.

As the summer of 1511 approached, he collected 1,200 men and around 18 ships for a mission to counter the Egyptian Mamelukes' renewed forays beyond the Red Sea. However, this was cancelled owing to logistical concerns and instead the force set sail for Malacca, a thriving city on the Malay peninsula's western coast. The narrow strait formed by the island of Sumatra created a choke point where high volumes of shipping traffic meant Malacca's harbour attracted huge quantities of merchandise. This was why Albuquerque was determined to capture the city. Malacca's reputation created its own vulnerabilities. Its defences were limited and foreigners such as Tamils, Chinese and Arabs were housed in different zones to keep them



The Strait of Hormuz that formed the entrance of the Persian Gulf was another strategic location that Albuquerque attempted to capture



Aden. Ormuz. Goa. Malacca. The 'grand strategy' at play for Portugal's knights-at-sea was to break and then monopolise the world's greatest trade route

Goa, the stronghold

Having seized the port city from its ruler, Alfonso de Albuquerque's talents in governance added another jewel to Portugal's overseas territories. So commenced 450 years of direct Portuguese control on the island that ended in 1961, when India canned diplomacy and annexed it by force. But during the early years of its colonisation, Goa served three purposes for its rulers.

First, it gave them a permanent base of operations in the Indian Ocean with direct access to the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal - the latter was the British East India Company's territory later on. Second, the Catholic missionary aspect of the Portuguese empire could be launched from Goa, protected as it was from Muslim and Hindu rulers and with transport links all the way to China and the East Indies. Third, Goa meant the Portuguese government collected revenue from many lucrative trades, from expensive spices to livestock. Little wonder that one of Albuquerque's initial projects in the city after seizing it was establishing a local mint for coinage.

There was a dark side to Portuguese rule too. While Alfonso de Albuquerque introduced new laws that invigorated business activities, he ordered a massacre of the resident Muslims. The surviving womenfolk were married off to Portuguese soldiers, whose settlement in Goa was strongly encouraged. Their success in Goa was not replicated in Malacca, however, whose Muslim ruler Albuquerque dispossessed in 1511. Under constant attack from local insurgents and the ascendant Dutch, Malacca slipped from Portugal's grasp by 1641, and its empire gradually crumbled.

"Albuquerque took hundreds of women hostage – their fate was never ascertained"

from bickering. Albuquerque also had a grievance he could use against Malacca's ruler, a dynastic sultan whose real name was lost to history, since a group of Portuguese mariners were held captive in the city after a failed diplomatic push in 1509.

The battle for Malacca began in earnest on 1 July with a blockade that halted the traffic coursing through the strait. When veiled threats upon its sultan only encouraged stubbornness, Albuquerque torched the ships belonging to the Arabs and Gujaratis (the Chinese and Javanese were spared). Undaunted, Malacca's powerful navy gave battle and Albuquerque's flagship, the Flor de la Mar, duelled with its larger Malaccan counterpart.

Details of this engagement have become muddled over the centuries but it's telling how the Portuguese, thoroughly outnumbered, failed to ruin their opponent's navy. A surprising reversal was how the Malaccan navy refused to press on and Albuquerque managed to effect a landing outside the city. Malacca had no walls and its homes and factories were made of wood. A narrow river formed a natural moat around the citadel, another wooden structure with ramparts bristling with cannon. A single bridge connected the citadel with the city proper and the Portuguese were at a loss on how to seize it. The Malaccans had no shortage of arms and men to protect what was theirs.

As the siege wore on, the Portuguese exercised restraint, not for humanitarian reasons but the knowledge of the untold spices warehoused in the city. Putting it to the torch would not help their cause. Extracting favours from local allies did help reverse the current stalemate - accounts

of the battle highlight the use of a Chinese junk, or junks, repurposed to form improvised bridges over the river so that the citadel could be stormed. As the month wore on, the final straw that broke Malacca's ruler was the sudden revolt by the Javanese expatriates. The Javanese were traders from the nearby island of Java, whose own splendid cities competed with Malacca's prestige.

Albuquerque conquered Malacca in mid-August. It was the pinnacle of his long martial career. A bitter twist was the return to Goa, when the Flor de la Mar and its companions were battered by a storm - they lost a fortune in plundered spice cargo. Albuquerque spent a year preparing a new expedition against Aden in the Red Sea. In 1513 he led around 20 ships against the Muslim city but failed to replicate his success in Malacca.

Since his last attempted takeover of Ormuz in 1507, much had changed, so in 1515 Albuquerque returned. Turan Shah was now on the throne, but controlled through threats of violence by his vizier's nephew, Rais Ahmed. Sensing an ally, the king allowed Albuquerque's ships to land and the Portuguese took Ormuz without bloodshed. Albuquerque later had Ahmed murdered.

Upon receiving new orders from Lisbon - he was to be replaced - Albuquerque abandoned Ormuz and sailed back to Goa, but he perished aboard his flagship before it could dock. The date was 16 December 1515, and he was 62 years old. A new imperialism was now in motion and for the next 200 years European naval might, following the Portuguese model, carved up the rest of Asia.

Lisbon, Portugal, has a square dedicated to Albuquerque's memory



A towering monument to Alfonso de Albuquerque in Lisbon immortalises him as a national hero. Although celebrated as an explorer, his missions involved more fighting than discovery



The Treasure Voyages of Zheng He

A Muslim eunuch, Zheng He was forced into servitude, but went on to become the greatest explorer in China's history

— Written by Joanne Al-Samarae —

Captured and castrated as a child, Zheng He climbed to the top of the imperial ladder, rising from servant to admiral. A towering figure, he led a mighty Ming armada on several epic treasure voyages to far-flung kingdoms in the Middle East and Africa - an entire century before Christopher Columbus arrived in the Americas and Vasco da Gama landed in India. A visionary explorer, his adventures transformed China into one of the 15th century's greatest superpowers.

Zheng He was born Ma He in 1371, amid the snow-capped peaks of southwest China's Yunnan Province. The son of Muslim parents, he grew up on the shores of Lake Dian, alongside his brother and four sisters. His father and grandfather both served the Mongol administration and bore the name Hajji, suggesting they had made the gruelling and costly pilgrimage to Mecca.

When Ma He was just 10, a Ming army invaded Yunnan, which was under the rule of the Mongol

Prince of Liang. After months of bloodshed, the Ming conquered the city, slaughtering tens of thousands in the process. Amidst the chaos, Ma He's father perished and the boy was taken prisoner. As was customary, he was castrated and later sent to Beiping, modern Beijing, to serve as a palace eunuch to the young prince, Zhu Di.

Receiving a formal education, Ma He was groomed to run the imperial household and guard the prince's harem - safeguarding the

integrity of the imperial bloodline. Over the years, he grew into a big man, "seven feet tall", with "a waist about five feet in circumference". Besides his clearly striking appearance, Ma He's mental prowess caught the attention of Zhu Di. Intelligent, composed and diligent, he was nicknamed 'Sanbao', meaning the Three Jewels or Three Protections.

Ma He joined the prince on a number of military expeditions, where he diligently studied



An ancient Chinese woodcut depicting Zheng He

"The fourth Ming voyage was to be the most ambitious to date, venturing further than ever before"

The Treasure Voyages of Zheng He

Zheng He travelled to more than 30 countries, leading several treasure voyages from China, as far as East Africa



Zheng He's Treasure Ships

On the emperor's orders, experienced shipwrights began designing a new vessel, known as the treasure ship. Far larger than any boat ever built, it featured nine staggered masts and 12 huge sails, crafted from red silk. Roughly 447 feet long and 183 feet wide, the Ming's treasure ships would dwarf Christopher Columbus's Santa María, which stood at around 70 feet long.

Cleverly designed to cut through waves, the treasure ship's V-shaped hulls were sharp while the prows were high. Joints were sealed with jute and rags, then covered with a mixture of fine sifted lime and tung oil which, when hardened, became waterproof. Nails were also covered with the mixture, to keep rust from damaging the wood.

While the lower decks housed storage space, kitchens, grand cabins and living quarters, the top deck was studded with 24 cast-bronze cannons, each with a range of about 800 feet. At the cutting edge, the vessels were fortified so they could ram smaller boats, and innovative watertight bulwark compartments, inspired by the chambered structure of a bamboo stalk, were added for safety.

In addition, a balanced rudder that could be elevated and lowered functioned as an extra keel, and floating anchors were added to increase stability in rough waters. Finally, the ships were festooned with glaring dragon eyes, so that the boats could see where they were going.

While the sheer size of Zheng He's treasure ships had long been debated, speculation was put to bed in the 1960s, when archaeologists discovered a huge 36-foot-long rudder and two 210-foot-wide dry docks.



Zheng He's gigantic treasure ships are believed to have been 447 feet long and 183 feet wide

the art of war. In 1390, he accompanied Zhu Di on his first campaign against the Mongols in the northern steppe. There, the pair secured a great victory, persuading the elusive Mongol commander, Naghachu, to surrender before a drop of blood had been spilt.

When Zhu Di rose up in revolt against his nephew, the Jianwen Emperor, in 1402, he entrusted the defence of Beiping's reservoir to the brilliant Ma He, later naming him a commander. After three years of civil war, Zhu Di seized the imperial capital of Nanjing, usurping the throne to become the Yongle Emperor. For his unwavering loyalty, Zhu Di gifted his eunuch the honorary name Zheng He, elevating him into the echelons of nobility and power.

While Zhu Di's usurpation caused a stir among the country's conformist Confucian scholars, the ambitious prince continued to surround himself with eunuchs, promoting Zheng He to Grand Director of the Directorate of Palace Servants. As a custodian of imperial custom and court etiquette, he advised Zhu Di on everything from table manners to diplomacy.

Eager to establish himself as a worthy emperor, Zhu Di turned his attention abroad. He ordered a grand treasure voyage to secure treaties, trade deals and alliances. It is also likely he sought to

“Zheng He climbed to the top of the imperial ladder, rising from servant to admiral”

further legitimise himself by extending China's sphere of political influence, with a network of tributaries and vassal states.

However, to do this, Zhu Di knew he needed to build a fleet, the likes of which the world had never seen. In 1403, construction began on 62 huge wooden treasure ships known as bao chuan, measuring 447 feet long and 183 feet wide, with nine masts each. Hundreds of specialised vessels were also built, including equestrian ships to transport horses, warships to fend off pirates and fresh water tankers.

To lead the fleet, the fledgling emperor turned to his principal envoy and commander, Zheng He, whose strength of character, flair for diplomacy and military prowess made him uniquely qualified for the role. The move marked the first time in Chinese history that a eunuch had ever been appointed to such a high-ranking military position.

Wasting no time, Zheng He began putting together a diverse crew of astrologers, mariners, eunuch directors, soldiers, sailors, cooks and medics.

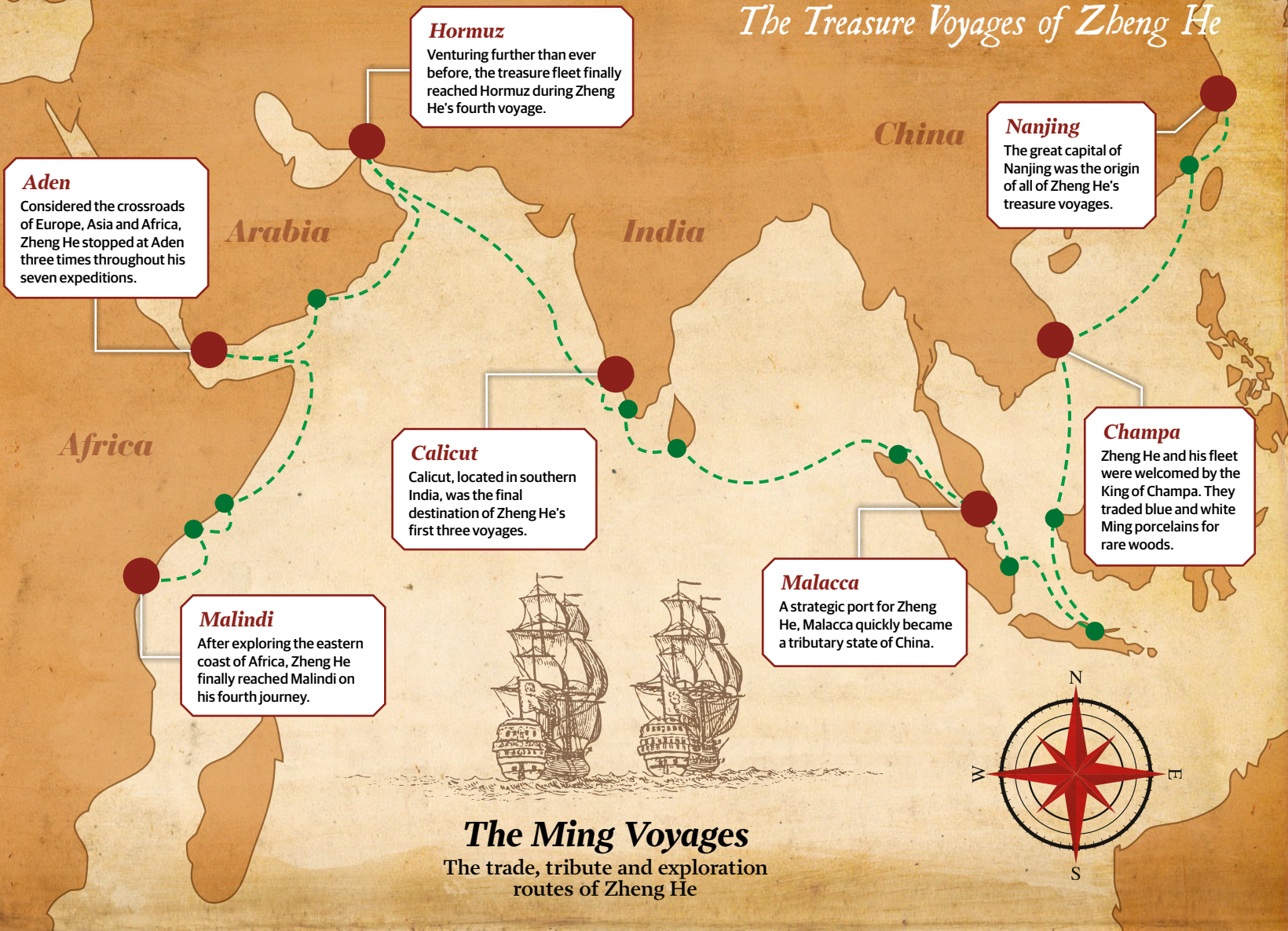
Zheng He's maiden voyage departed on 11 July 1405. The evening before the fleet was due to raise anchor, the Yongle Emperor held a banquet for the crew and sacrifices were made to Tianfei, the Chinese goddess of seafarers, to ensure safe passage. Even Zheng He, a practising Muslim, joined the ceremonies.

The rituals continued the following day, with each captain offering a prayer before his ship's compass. As chants echoed through the air, the enormous fleet of 255 vessels and 27,800 men inched out of Nanjing port and headed to



The tomb of Zheng He, where a lock of his hair is believed to have been buried

The Treasure Voyages of Zheng He



Liujagang, where they were organised into squadrons. More akin to a floating city than an armada, it was an awe-inspiring sight and an undeniable symbol of the emperor's immense power. Hidden within the bowels of Zheng He's humongous treasure ships were precious cargos of silk, lacquerware, embroideries, porcelain, calligraphy scrolls and elegant musical instruments - the finest China had to offer.

The fleet scratched along the southeast coast to Fujian, where they waited several months for favourable weather conditions to carry them across the South China Sea. Zheng He and his captains navigated using compasses and monitored time by burning incense sticks. To ensure they were on course, they used the Arab system of cross-checking their latitude with the altitudes of stars above the horizon, measuring degrees in finger widths.

After crossing the South China Sea, the Ming armada passed through Champa, where the eunuch admiral traded traditional blue and white Ming porcelains and silk for ebony, lakawood, black bamboo and rare aloe wood. In addition, he received offerings of rhinoceros horn and ivory as tribute to Zhu Di, before setting sail for Java. The King of East Java welcomed the fleet, exchanging spices and copper for porcelains



The Rise and Fall of the Ming Empire

The founder of the Ming dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang, was born into obscurity. Orphaned as a teen, he spent his youth at a monastery, before joining a Buddhist rebel group in 1352. Rising quickly through the ranks, he led a successful invasion of Nanjing in 1356, before taking Beijing from its Mongolian overlords in 1368 and declaring himself emperor. Ruling with an iron fist, Zhu Yuanzhang launched a series of bloody purges, in which tens of thousands were executed.

Upon his death, Zhu Yuanzhang was succeeded by his grandson, but his embittered son, Zhu Di, launched a campaign to take the throne for himself. Once in power, Zhu Di launched the treasure voyages to expand the Chinese tribute system and trade. One of the best-loved Ming exports was its blue and white porcelain. However, Zhu Di's death ushered in a period of isolationism, with the tribute system collapsing soon after.

Luckily, by the 1550s, there was a revival in maritime trade and the country's population was on the rise. Unfortunately, economic prosperity was followed by decline. With court eunuchs vying for power and a number of costly military campaigns in Korea and Japan, the economy nosedived. Finally, the Little Ice Age struck, triggering widespread famine.

In 1642, frustrated and starving rebels burst the dikes of the Yellow River, causing mass floods and killing hundreds of thousands. As society collapsed, two rival leaders took control of the country. Two years later, the last Ming emperor committed suicide, and the Manchu people exploited the chaos to become the next ruling dynasty.



Zhu Yuanzhang declared himself emperor in 1368, and the Ming Dynasty was born



A bronze relief of Zheng He and his fleet in Malacca, Malaysia, during his first expedition

“While navigating the Strait of Malacca, Zheng He’s fleet encountered the notorious pirate Chen Zuyi”

and silk, and invited the Chinese to witness traditional performances, jousting competitions and cremations.

Continuing south, the fleet navigated Sumatra's coast, before crossing the Indian Ocean to the bustling trading port of Ceylon. Although the region was replete with gemstones and pearls, Zheng He sensed the king was uneasy. Eager to avoid conflict, he ordered his fleet to head for Calicut - a powerful city-state on India's west coast. There, he marvelled at the structured social and justice systems, and documented similarities between the Ming and Calicut populations' appreciation for literature and the arts.

The Chinese remained for a number of months, bartering and trading, with Zheng He securing a healthy haul of precious stones, pearls, coral, turmeric and pepper. With the inaugural voyage drawing to a close, the Dragon fleet headed home, carrying with it ambassadors and tribute from Calicut, Quilon and Semudera.

However, while navigating the Strait of Malacca, Zheng He's fleet encountered the notorious pirate Chen Zuyi. After ambushing the marauder, the Dragon armada set fire to 10 of his ships, killed 5,000 of his men and captured Chen himself, before escorting him to Nanjing, where he was executed.

Pleased at Zheng He's revival of China's tributary network, Zhu Di ordered a second expedition to return the ambassadors to their respective homes in 1407. However, it wasn't all plain sailing. When Zheng He's troops arrived in Java, 170 were killed on the orders of the King of West Java. The Ming court demanded 60,000 liang (3,000 kilograms) of gold as compensation for their deaths. Reluctantly, the king obliged, sending an envoy to China to atone for the mistake.

Once in Calicut, Zheng He was invited to reside over the swearing-in ceremony of the new king.

Meanwhile, some of his fleet headed for Siam to bolster their campaign against the Khmers, whom they had been fighting for decades. As a token of gratitude, Siam sent envoys to China, with tributes of elephants and peacocks. Zhu Di responded with extravagant gifts of ornate court costumes and writing materials - promoting the spread of Chinese culture throughout Asia.

In 1409, Zheng He led yet another expedition of 50 ships and 30,000 men. After stopping in Champa, they continued on to Java and then Malacca, where Zheng He presented the king with two silver seals, officially recognising the city-state as an autonomous realm, while simultaneously recognising it as a vassal state. Soon after, the population of Malacca began to assimilate Chinese culture, donning traditional garb, with some even marrying Chinese crew members. During this time, it's believed that the King of Malacca converted to Islam, playing a crucial role in the spread of the religion across Southeast Asia.

By the time the treasure fleet arrived in Ceylon in 1411, the once-unified island had erupted into civil war, with Sinhalese authorities fighting the Hindu Tamils, who had gained a foothold in the north. Zheng He was confronted by the local leader, Vira Alakeshvara, who not only refused to pay tribute to the Yongle Emperor, but denied the eunuch permission to erect a commemorative tablet on the island. Alakeshvara then drove Zheng He and his men back to their ships. Enraged, the Ming commander led his troops to Kotte, where they seized the royal city, captured the Alakeshvara and hauled him to China.

Upon Zheng He's return home, news of his successes had spread throughout the region, and a steady stream of tributes began to pour in with

The Treasure Voyages of Zheng He

envoys from Bengal, Calicut, Cochin, Java and Malacca paying their respects.

Having re-established China's regional dominance, Zhu Di shifted his attention elsewhere. The fourth Ming voyage was to be the most ambitious to date, venturing further than ever before - the Persian Gulf. However, with no natural landmarks to guide him back home, Zheng He built a 33-foot artificial mountain at Liujia, named Bao Shan, or Treasure Mountain, before departing. At its base, Zhu Di erected a plaque that read: "By day, smoke rises from the mountain. By night, a fire glows bright".

Setting sail in 1413, after making some customary stops at Champa and Java, Zheng He ventured on to the Maldives for the first time. Then, he navigated the Arabian Sea, reaching the Arab port of Hormuz, where Chinese wares were traded for sapphires, rubies and carpets. Masters of hospitality, the Arabs lavished the Chinese with lions, leopards and elegant Arabian horses, as tribute to the Dragon Emperor. Before leaving, Zheng He's doctors learnt about new medicinal herbs and tinctures from Arab pharmacists. Meanwhile, the locals were introduced to Chinese measuring systems and musical instruments.

In 1417, Zheng He embarked on a fifth expedition, stopping at the port city of Quanzhou to collect traditional porcelains, teas and silks for trade. During his stay, Zheng He worshipped at the city's main mosque, while also attending Buddhist rituals. From here, he was alleged to have recruited a team of Arab pilots and navigators for the voyage ahead.

Treading new waters, Zheng He's fleet ventured beyond Hormuz, to the south Arabian port of Aden. The sultan welcomed Zheng He with open arms, keen to secure an ally against his Egyptian rivals. Zheng He obliged, receiving an exotic array of lions, camels and leopards, as well as a giraffe, for his trouble. With the coast of Aden disappearing into the horizon, the Ming armada broke new ground, visiting Mogadishu, Brava and then Malindi on the African coast.

Picking up where the fifth voyage had left off, the sixth expedition was a matter of exploration, rather than trade and exploit. Accounts are littered with descriptions of the dry East-African land, locals and the warm weather. However, in 1424, the unthinkable happened. At the age of 64, Zhu Di died. On the day his successor ascended to the throne, he announced his first edict - that the building of all treasure ships would be stopped immediately, and all treasure voyages would cease.



An intricate relief depicting the landing of the eunuch commander, Zheng He, in Java, which he visited multiple times



A world map, believed by some to have been created by Zheng He

China National Maritime Day is observed on 11 July, the date of Zheng He's first voyage

Though the emperor relieved Zheng He of his duties as admiral, he did place him at the head of the military command in Nanjing. However,

just eight months after ascending he throne, the new

emperor died suddenly, leaving his son, Zhu Zhanji, as heir. In the ensuing years, both China's tribute trade and international standing had once again declined. Vowing to restore the dynasty's reputation, Zhu Zhanji ordered a seventh voyage of the treasure fleet.

After departing Nanjing in 1431, Zheng He, who was back at the helm, led his fleet all the way to Calicut. Here, the 300-strong armada split off into smaller convoys, with one headed for Hormuz and east Africa, pushing as far south as Malindi. Once reunited, the Dragon armada powered its

way home, but Zheng He died at the age of 62. In keeping with Islamic tradition, his body was washed and wrapped in white cloth, before being delivered to the watery depths - his head pointed towards Mecca. At his request, a lock of hair was buried just outside of Nanjing. When news of his passing spread, a service was held in Java, where prayers drifted out over the sea.

Zheng He's final voyage was also destined to be the last great expedition of the treasure fleet. With half the world within its grasp, China retreated from the international stage, ushering in a policy of isolationism that would last centuries. After championing the brilliance of Chinese culture and philosophy for decades, its great armada was willed into extinction. Had Zheng He's treasure fleet continued to rule the waves, it's hard to imagine that the Portuguese and Spanish would have dared enter Ming-controlled waters. Instead, all they heard were whispers of a legendary Muslim eunuch, who commanded a floating city and mapped the world.



Trade in Japan

The Nanban Era

Although Japan's brief flirtation with Europe was a powerful one, it was too much too soon for the new order

— Written by Hareth Al Bustani —

In 1543, three Portuguese merchants boarded a Chinese junk at the colony of Malacca and set sail for China. Struck by a violent typhoon, the ship was hurled far off course, eventually washing up on the small, subtropical island of Tanegashima - just off Japan's southernmost island of Kyushu. There they were received with cautious warmth by Shimazu Takahisa, the leader of southern Kyushu's mighty Satsuma domain. Sensing Takahisa's curiosity, the merchants fired off their arquebuses to much awe, shock and glee. A Chinese pirate told the merchants they had landed in Japan, a feudal country presided over by a warrior class, known as the samurai. While the nation's powerful provincial clans had once been united beneath the yoke of the military dictator known as the shōgun, his government had since collapsed, dispersing power into the provinces.

With everything up for grabs, warlords like Takahisa were struggling to contain not just their neighbours' encroachments, but their own vassals'. Though Japan had abundant silver, trade with China had long been decimated by piracy. As the merchants returned to Malacca to share the news, word of their alien weaponry spread across Kyushu like wildfire.

Within a year Portuguese ships had anchored as far as northern Kyushu, setting up a trading post in the province of Bungo. However, it was the country's untapped spiritual potential that in

1549 lured Francis Xavier, a founder of the Jesuit Society of Jesus, to the country, where Buddhism and the indigenous Shinto tradition were the leading religions. In Malacca he heard how a whole village erected crucifixes on their doors after some Portuguese merchants used one to chase a ghost from their house. Xavier beamed, "Thus I hurry in joyful hope, and my soul jubilates in trusting anticipation of the bountiful harvest that awaits us there."

His first host was Takahisa, who had just used the arquebus in battle for the first time during a castle siege. Takahisa recognised the respect Xavier commanded from the Portuguese merchants, and when the Jesuit handed him an image of the Virgin Mary with baby Jesus, he knelt down in respect. Xavier, meanwhile, was taken by Takahisa's coat of arms, depicting a white cross within a circle. Although Takahisa told Xavier he should "very well guard" his stunningly illustrated "books of the Christian law", there was much confusion over the faith. Xavier had come to Japan from India, the birthplace of Buddhism, and with limited Portuguese, his translator confounded the Christian doctrine with Buddhist terminology and concepts - using the word 'Dainichi', or the 'Great Sun', rather than 'Deus' for 'God'.

Xavier continued on to the port of Hirado before crossing over to the country's largest island of Honshu in search of the 'king'. Though he made it to the anarchic capital, with the shōgun in hiding and emperor living in obscurity, he accepted an invitation from lord Ōtomo Sōrin in Bungo.





When Portuguese traders in Macao saw how much silver their peers had brought back, they flocked to Japan's ports

Image source: Getty Images

Already trading with Portuguese merchants, Sōrin allowed Xavier to preach to his heart's content before returning to Goa in 1552, having baptised hundreds.

Eager to draw more pirate-proof Portuguese ships to his realm, Sōrin sent a diplomatic mission along with Xavier to the Portuguese governor of the Indies, and Xavier espoused the open hearts, minds and souls of the Japanese people. Sōrin gave the Jesuits magnificent cedar houses, and they in return built him an orphan's refuge and a leper's hospital. However, the locals were repulsed by lepers, seen as a force of religious impurity. Similarly, the Jesuit mealtime tradition of having their most powerful members serve the lowliest ones was a shock to the hierarchical Japanese system.

In 1557, Portugal seized Macao, giving them access to Canton's lucrative silk market. When an enormous 2,000-tonne ship left full of raw silk and returned with 120,000 cubic feet of silver bullion, hysteria set in, with merchants desperately auctioning the rights to sail to Japan. There they staggered off their ships followed by bands of black slaves and armed retainers, introducing the locals to exotic goods such as tobacco. The Japanese collectively referred to these foreigners as *nanban*, a word previously used to describe 'southern barbarians'.

"The Japanese collectively referred to these foreigners as *nanban*, a word previously used to describe 'southern barbarians'"

By now Japan's master swordsmiths had already reverse-engineered Portuguese guns and began mass producing their own variety, nicknamed the 'tanegashima'. Instead, Portuguese traders were uniquely positioned to act as brokers, buying up half of the country's annual silver production. Francis Xavier returned in 1559 accompanied by six Jesuit padres, who found fertile ground among the oppressed peasants of Japan's westernmost reaches. With lords already well-disposed towards them, the Jesuits' notion of eternal glory appealed greatly to a people accustomed to a life of voiceless hardship. One missionary, Father Gaspar Vilela, even convinced the shōgun himself to let him proselytise across the capital with his blind Japanese protégé, Brother Lorenzo, converting 1,300 people in just a year.

One enterprising missionary even convinced the warlord

Ōmura Sumitada to convert to Christianity for "great spiritual and temporal profits". As his Nagasaki harbour blossomed into a Christian community - named the 'Port of Our Lady of Succor' - Portuguese ships poured in, at the expense of the rival city of Hirado. Nagasaki would go on to become not just the country's busiest foreign trade port, but the heart of its Christian community. Just as churches began sprouting up outside the capital, the shōgun was murdered in 1565, and hostile Buddhist sects convinced the emperor to expel the country's 12 missionaries. Despite being forced into hiding, Father Luís Fróis was briefly able to bring two warring armies together for Christmas Day as 'brothers in

Christ' - even if bloodshed did resume the next morning.

While the country's warlords had long been locked in perpetual conflict, a clear victor was beginning to emerge. Oda Nobunaga was a military genius

Japan's flirtation with Europe brought guns to the country, changing the face of war forever

The British samurai

In 1598, an ambitious 34-year-old Englishman called William Adams, who had served under Francis Drake, signed up as a pilot for a Dutch voyage across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. After a series of disasters, Adams' ship washed ashore in Japan's province of Bungo in April 1600 before being raided by pirates - though some of this was later returned on the local lord's orders.

Though Adams and his surviving crew were treated warmly at first, they were in the midst of a Jesuit stronghold - and as Portuguese Catholics, the Jesuits bitterly loathed the English and Dutch Protestants. After first appealing to the local lord to rescue the ship's crew, upon hearing that the vessel was a Dutch one they shifted tone, encouraging the authorities to arrest them as pirates and execute them. The incident caused such a stir that Adams was summoned to Osaka castle to meet a man he mistook for the king, the future shōgun Tokugawa Ieyasu.

After questioning Adams, Ieyasu, who had little regard for the Portuguese, decided he would be of great use. Sparing his life, Adams went on to design and build Japan's first ever Western-style galleon, and though Ieyasu refused to let him return back to his wife and children, he made him a samurai with his own fief - an unprecedented move. Adams not only adopted a Japanese wardrobe and lifestyle, but a Japanese wife, later writing: "God hath provided for me after my great misery." When the Dutch and English finally arrived, Adams acted as a translator, later dying in Hirado in 1620, estranged from his second wife, leaving £500 to his English family and Japanese children.



Although Adams initially wanted to return home to his family, when the opportunity arose, the samurai turned it down



While Chinese and Japanese ships had long been plagued by piracy, the 2,000-tonne Portuguese ships were impervious to attack

who in his mid-20s had defeated an invading army of 25,000 men with just 3,000 of his own. Emboldened, he went on to ally himself with several powerful warlords before taking the capital itself and installing the dead shōgun's brother as a puppet. On a spring afternoon in 1569, Father Fróis secured an audience with the remarkable Nobunaga, who was greatly pleased by the Jesuit's disparaging remarks about the Buddhists. The most powerful sect of warrior monks, the Ikkō-ikki, had grown so strong they had taken over their own province. To Nobunaga they presented a dangerous alternate source of authority to his own. Seeing Christianity as a useful tool to counteract their influence, he had the shōgun issue Fróis a license to preach.

At another meeting, as Fróis described the nature of the soul, one of Nobunaga's Buddhist secretaries grabbed the poor blind convert Lorenzo and threatened to put the idea to the test by cutting off his head, only to be restrained by Nobunaga's trusted follower, Hideyoshi. Over the next decade, as Nobunaga went from strength to



Although Japan's early 'Kirishitan' community misunderstood some core Christian concepts, they would cling to their faith in the face of the most terrible of tortures

strength, Christianity flourished. Thanks to the efforts of 20 padres and 30 helpers, the Christian population swelled to 150,000, worshipping at 200 churches. Though most lived in the west, central Japan boasted 15,000 followers, and one Christian lord, Takayama 'Justo' Ukon, helped convert a third of his domain. As the faith spread, many Japanese adopted trendy European names, scattering Portuguese words casually in conversation and donning western accessories and rosaries.

In 1580, having spent decades serving the church, converting 60,000 of his subjects and even destroying Shinto and Buddhist buildings, the Christian lord of Nagasaki handed the port and neighbouring city over to the Society of Jesus. By now the introduction of Portuguese firearms had made a drastic impact on Japanese society. Traditionally war was a matter of immense pride to the samurai, reserved for only the best-trained soldiers. However, the pragmatic Nobunaga appreciated how quickly laymen could be trained to fire a gun effectively. At the Battle of Nagashino in 1575, he finally perfected their use, arranging 3,000 gunners in three lines and firing mass volleys to decimate the enemy's cavalry charge. With the growing importance of lower-class soldiers, the samurai ranks swelled, giving rise not just to larger armies, but enormous castles such as Nobunaga's groundbreaking stronghold of Azuchi.

There Nobunaga received a visit from the towering Italian Jesuit Alexander Valignano, who began to encourage his followers to adapt to their surroundings. Having authored a handbook on

Japanese etiquette and customs, he not only made the Jesuits don Japanese clothes, but forbade the rearing of pigs, goats and cows, instead insisting his followers eat "salted or raw fish, limes, sea snails and such bitter or salty things" - Japanese morsels the monks found abhorrent. They had to eat with chopsticks, sitting painfully on their heels, and never retch, no matter how 'repugnant' the dish.

In 1582, having conquered a third of the country, Nobunaga was ambushed by one of his own generals and committed seppuku, ritualistic suicide by belly-cutting. His brilliant protégé Hideyoshi wasted no time in avenging his master's treacherous death, destroying the traitor with remarkable haste. Hideyoshi carried on Nobunaga's conquest, eventually bringing all of Japan under his control. The son of a peasant, though he lacked prestige he had himself adopted into a powerful family, allowing him to scoop up a string of titles such as chancellor and regent. He continued Nobunaga's warm treatment of the Christians, allowing a church to be built in his castle at Osaka - completed on Christmas Day in 1583 - with much help from Hideyoshi's trusted Christian, or 'Kirishitan', general, Takayama Ukon.

That same year, Japanese settlers on the island of Luzon in the Philippines clashed briefly with the Spanish colonial overlords after a perceived attempt to stoke rebellion among the local tribes.

"The Jesuits had to eat with chopsticks, sitting painfully on their heels, and never retch, no matter how 'repugnant' the dish"

The next year, a Spanish ship travelling from Manila was forced to seek shelter from extreme weather in the Japanese port of Hirado. Having had all his commerce drained away by Nagasaki, the local lord pledged his port to the visitors, even offering to host non-Jesuit missionaries. Although the Spanish were still desperate to gain a foothold in the country, the Portuguese monopoly was further buttressed in 1585 by a papal decree, granting the Jesuits the sole right to the mission in Japan.

In May 1586, Hideyoshi received a visit from the Jesuits' vice-provincial himself, Gaspar Coelho, at his magnificent Osaka castle. After his barons left, Hideyoshi spoke liberally with his old acquaintance Father Fróis, who could now converse freely in Japanese. In a bizarre exchange, hinting at Hideyoshi's burgeoning megalomaniacal ambitions, he boasted to Coelho that he would one day conquer China and make it a Christian

country. He planned to invade Korea first with 2,000 ships, and indicated a desire to buy two heavily armed Portuguese vessels. Coelho in turn bragged that he could summon warships from India and muster up support from Japan's Christian lords.

Although the meeting secured more exemptions for the Jesuits, whether he had meant to impress or intimidate Hideyoshi, Coelho had inadvertently planted a dangerous seed in his mind. Desperate to consolidate his authority, Hideyoshi was in the midst of reforming the nation - seizing weapons from all non-samurai, overhauling the country's tax system and rigidly splitting society into the warrior, artisan, merchant and peasant classes, each with their own unique set of rights. Having united the realm, control was even more important to Hideyoshi than it was to his predecessor. Everyone and everything, including the Buddhist institutions, were brought under his

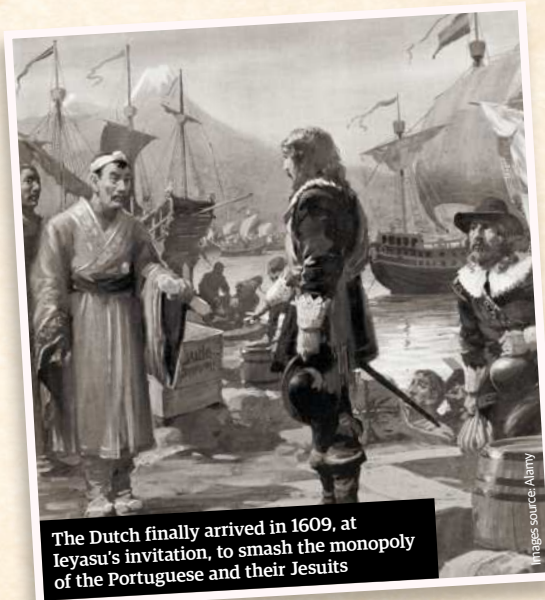
The Portuguese ship

Armed with powerful cannons, the 2,000-tonne Portuguese ship was absolutely enormous by Chinese and Japanese standards, easily capable of withstanding pirate attacks.



The Portuguese arrive

Despite a vast cultural divide, the Japanese and Portuguese both spoke the language of trade



The Dutch finally arrived in 1609, at Ieyasu's invitation, to smash the monopoly of the Portuguese and their Jesuits

Nanban

Portuguese traders flocked to Japan's ports, trailed by an entourage of slaves and guards, all of whom were considered 'nanban', or 'southern barbarians'.

The samurai

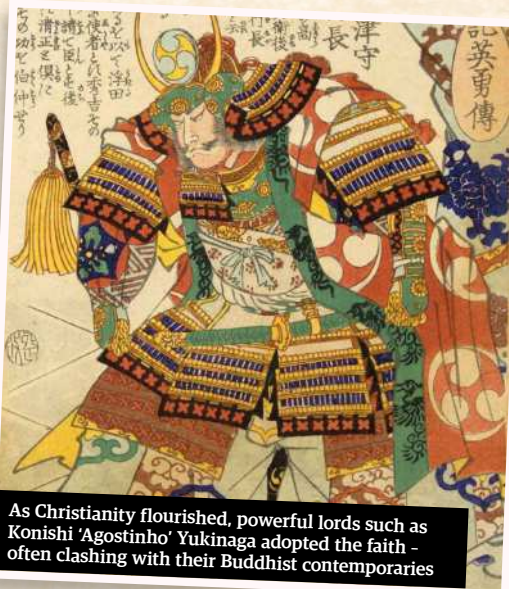
While some samurai respected and even converted to Christianity, others treated it with great suspicion.

Society of Jesus

The Jesuits played an instrumental diplomatic role in introducing the samurai to Portuguese merchants, forming a crucial cultural bridge.

Silver for silk

With a base in Macau, the Portuguese were perfectly positioned to help Japan meet its demand for Chinese silk while hauling off its highly valuable silver.



As Christianity flourished, powerful lords such as Konishi 'Agostinho' Yukinaga adopted the faith - often clashing with their Buddhist contemporaries

control. The idea that the country's now-200,000 Christians might answer to another foreign power, or exist within an alternate hierarchy, was a threat to the entire system of governance he had worked so hard to build.

After another seemingly cordial meeting aboard Coelho's ship in 1587, Hideyoshi sent the vice-provincial a sudden, stark message; in less than three weeks, he and his Jesuits had to go. He levied a lengthy list of charges, accusing the missionaries - not entirely without base - of encouraging lords to force their subjects to convert, selling Japanese people into slavery and destroying Buddhist and Shinto iconography and shrines. Fortunately for Coelho, Hideyoshi was too busy stamping out the remaining pockets of dissent to enforce this edict, and even allowed the elderly padre Organtino to remain in the capital.

Three years later, although Hideyoshi seized Nagasaki from the Jesuits - making it his own

direct fief - trade went uninterrupted. Japanese Christians were allowed to continue practising their faith. After defeating his final Japanese enemies, Hideyoshi redirected his aggression, and the country's warlike temperament, elsewhere. Clearly pleased with himself, in 1591 he sent a letter to the Portuguese viceroy of the Indies, gloating over his pacification of the "country of the gods". He claimed that foreign nations were lining up to hurl themselves at his feet, anticipating his forthcoming conquest of China, and even India. The Spanish governor of the Philippines, meanwhile, received a letter not only boasting that Hideyoshi would soon conquer China and Korea, but suggesting he send tribute as an act of submission.

Flouting Hideyoshi's ban on Christian missionaries, the Spanish responded by sending four Franciscan priests to Japan, led by Father Pedro Baptista, under the guise of a diplomatic



In 1575, Oda Nobunaga mastered the use of matchlocks at the Battle of Nagashino, ushering in a new age of samurai warfare and urbanism

leave, as their churches were torn down around them only 25 Jesuits departed - the remaining 100 simply hid among Japanese Christians.

Following Hideyoshi's death, Tokugawa Ieyasu waged a brief civil war before being declared shōgun. Among his leading priorities was breaking the Portuguese stranglehold over Japan's trade network. Eager to learn from the rest of the world, he opened his eastern ports up to the Spanish and asked them to send him merchants and shipwrights. When the Spanish simply sent in more Franciscans, Ieyasu turned to the Dutch East India Company, who operated under direct orders to destroy Portuguese holdings. Two Dutch ships landed in Hirado in 1609, followed by an English East India Company agent.

Then, in 1611, Ieyasu once again proscribed Christianity, and two years later, when a Spanish missionary built a chapel and held a public mass, 27 Japanese converts were executed. Finally, in 1614, no longer willing to tolerate the risk of sedition among Christian lords, the Tokugawa regime expelled the missionaries. Although peasants were largely left to their own devices, their churches were destroyed, and lords who refused to apostatise, like Ukon, were stripped of their land - leaving them, in the rigid post-Hideyoshi world, classless nobodies. While there had previously been more than 150 missionaries, by 1614 there were just 47.

Though Ieyasu had always mitigated his need for control with a desire for foreign trade, after his death his successors escalated matters, banning even peasants from adopting Christianity and confining all non-Chinese foreign ships to Hirado and Nagasaki. Scores of Christians were executed, with 30 beheaded and 25 burned alive at the Great Martyrdom of 1622 - including nine foreign priests. Despite holding the missionaries in little regard, English trader Richard Cocks claimed to have witnessed 55 martyred at once in Miyako: "Among them were little children of five or six, burned alive in the arms of their mothers, who cried 'Jesus, receive their souls!'"

Things ramped up again in 1625, when all Spanish subjects were ordered to leave. While some daring missionaries continued to smuggle themselves in, it was a fool's errand as anti-

"Scores of Christians were executed, with 30 beheaded and 25 burned alive at the Great Martyrdom of 1622"

envoy. The governor said it would take time to convey Hideyoshi's request to his king, but in the meantime suggested opening up trade relations with Japan. Confined to Nagasaki with only 10 of the 150 Jesuits granted licenses to preach, they were furious at the Franciscan flouting of the law, and the two sides launched smear campaigns against one another.

Things came to a head when, in 1596, Hideyoshi withdrew from the frustrating first stage of his Korean invasion, not only in a foul mood, but clearly in a state of mental decline - paranoid about his succession, he forced his nephew and former heir to commit suicide, and brutally killed his entire family. Amid this backdrop, when

a Spanish galleon called the San Felipe was shipwrecked on the Japanese coast, the local lord broke it apart and shared its cargo with Hideyoshi. According to the Jesuits, the ship's furious captain stormed into Osaka, screaming that his king would soon colonise Japan and that the Christians would rise up in his favour. In January 1597, Hideyoshi's patience ran out. Father Pedro Baptista, five other Franciscans and 19 Japanese converts were arrested, mutilated, paraded from Kyoto to Nagasaki city by city and finally crucified upside down. Japanese crucifixions were a uniquely agonising affair, with the torturers impaling the victims with as many spears as possible without hitting their vital organs. Despite being ordered to

The road to isolation

While Japan's relationship with Europe blossomed at a spectacular rate, their love was not to last

1543

A Chinese junk washes up on Tanegashima bearing three Portuguese merchants, whose guns impress the local lord.



Images source: Alamy

1549

Father Francis Xavier, a founder of the Society of Jesus, arrives in Japan, launching the Christian mission.



Images source: Alamy

1563

Hoping to secure trade and security, Ōmura Sumitada, the lord of Yokoseura, agrees to be baptised Dom Bartolomeu.

1569

Jesuit Father Fróis meets with the country's most powerful lord, Oda Nobunaga, in the capital of Kyoto, receiving a license to preach.

1580

With the country's 'Kirishitan' population at 150,000, Dom Bartolomeu gives the cities of Nagasaki and Mogi to the Society of Jesus in perpetuity.

1575

Nobunaga masters the use of muskets at the Battle of Nagashino, a turning point in the composition and scale of Japanese armies.



In 1549, the Portuguese Father Francis Xavier launched the Christian mission to Japan, winning over several southern lords

The acceptance of Christianity was hot and cold with the changing of rulers and their views on the new religious order

Christian sentiment spread to the villages, with converts weeded out and brutalised. Though some apostatised, many clung to their faith, enduring unspeakable tortures and paying the ultimate price. Where there were once 300,000 Christians, by 1625 the remaining 100,000 had been driven underground - disappearing without a trace.

Despite this, Japanese trade continued to prosper, with merchants hauling off silver, copper, iron, sulphur, rice, grains, lacquer goods, fans and crafts, and importing raw silk, fabrics, cotton, animal hides, dyes, sugar, lead and tin. Japanese

settlements had sprung up across Southeast Asia, and their ships had become notoriously piratical and feared across the region - to the point where Luzon requested that Japan limit licensed visits to just four a year.

However, continuing to escalate matters, in 1633 the regime issued the first of its notorious expulsion edicts - forbidding unlicensed ships to leave, and sentencing all Japanese expatriates to death

upon their return. By 1639, after struggling to put down the populist Shimabara rebellion - where 20,000 peasants fought under Christian leaders, killing 10,000 government soldiers - the Tokugawa decided enough was enough. The Portuguese were deported and the Dutch were confined to the port of Deshima in Nagasaki. According to the final edict, any Portuguese ship entering Japan would be destroyed and its crew killed. Sure enough, when a Portuguese vessel arrived at Nagasaki the next summer, seeking to reopen trade, the ship was promptly burned and 57 crew beheaded after each refused to renounce Christianity. The Japanese only spared 13 so they could take the news back to Macao: Portugal's flirtation with Japan was over, the Christian mission was over and a new, Japanese dawn had begun: the age of Sakoku - isolation.



In the Japanese gun-manufacturing village of Sakai on Christmas Day 1567, Father Fróis brought together two warring armies as 'brothers in Christ'



1583

Hideyoshi allows a church to be built in his castle of Osaka with the aid of the Christian general Takayama Ukon.

1586

Hideyoshi tells the vice-provincial Coelho he will conquer China and make it Christian, and Coelho boasts of his influence over Japan's Christian lords.

1597

Seven Franciscan missionaries are crucified alongside 19 Japanese converts - the 26 Martyrs of Japan.

1639

After the Shimabara Rebellion, the final expulsion edict ensures that no Japanese subjects can leave, and bans all Portuguese ships, on pain of death.

1582

Having conquered a third of Japan, Nobunaga is betrayed and kills himself, leaving power in the hands of his loyal general, Hideyoshi.



1585

The pope issues a decree granting the Jesuits a monopoly over the Christian mission in Japan.

1587

Hideyoshi presents a lengthy list of charges against the Jesuits and orders them to leave within 20 days, but does not follow through.

1622

The Great Martyrdom at Nagasaki, where 30 Christians are beheaded and 25 burned alive.





Yermak Timofeyevich

Conquering Siberia

Yermak Timofeyevich was an explorer, adventurer and conqueror who became a folk hero in Russia and almost a saint, if history can be trusted

— Written by Dominic Eames —



Yermak and his Cossacks overwhelm the Tatars in Vasily Surikov's 'Conquest of Siberia'

The Stroganov family needed help. They were among the wealthiest and most powerful people in Russia, yet they always had their sights on the next enterprise to add to their prestige and their coffers. From the mid-16th century the Stroganov ambition could not be contained by the borders of the country as their gaze turned to the east.

There was the unknown, untapped expanse of Siberia. Tsar Ivan IV – better remembered as Ivan the Terrible – had granted the family permission to expand into lands deep beyond the Ural Mountains, into territory that wasn't his to give. Instead it was part of the Khanate of Sibir, inhabited by the Tatars and ruled by a khan named Kuchum. The Stroganovs had been dealing with raids from Kuchum's warriors for years, so

the prospect of invading Siberia in order to exploit its abundant natural resources was a daunting military venture. They needed help, and they found it in the form of an enigmatic man destined to go down in history: Yermak Timofeyevich.

He was leader, or ataman, of a band of Cossacks, and fearless, adventurous and ruthless as all Cossacks should be. Living in the far-southwestern regions of Russia, Yermak's people had begun as peasants fleeing serfdom before forming their own quasi-independent communities, where strength and skill with a weapon was paramount. The Cossacks grew into a military force strong enough to be called upon to assist the army in protecting the fringes of Russia, but too uncontrollable to stop their robbing, raiding and pirating.

Such was the lot of a younger Yermak – it is thought, at least. There are accounts of him

fighting for the tsar in the wars to the west, but the truth is that his birthplace, early life, military experience and even his true name remain points of debate. Even his physical appearance is a mystery, with only one known description giving any clues: "Flat-faced, black beard with curly hair, of medium stature, thick-set and broad-shouldered." And even that comes from a chronicle written long after his death by someone who never met him. In the absence of evidence, Yermak is based more on folklore than fact.

His legendary story really begins in 1579 with the Stroganovs and their expansion into Siberia. The merchant family produced their own chronicle of these events in which they take credit for approaching Yermak and his band of Cossacks and asking for his assistance, but it is possible that he came east of his own volition. Either way,

Death of a conqueror, birth of a legend

"During that night there was heavy rain. The pagans, like a viper breathing fury against Yermak and his company, were preparing their swords for vengeance," read the Stroganov chronicle about the night that Kuchum ambushed Yermak.

The Cossacks had made camp on an island surrounded by two branches of a river, so they had no guard believing they were safe. The Tatars, however, were waiting for them all to go to sleep before fording the river and launching a surprise attack. "Swiftly they unsheathed their arms, fell upon the camp and slew them... the most wise, brave and eloquent Yermak was killed."

According to legend, Yermak fought his way out of the bloodbath and down to the water, where he waded out to the boats. His foot slipped, however, and he drowned – pulled down by the weight of the beautiful chain mail that had been gifted to him by the tsar as a prize for conquering Siberia.

His body was washed down river and found by a fisherman a few days later. Knowing it was their enemy, the tribe hung up and mutilated Yermak, but the body did not decompose at all. The Tatars took this as a divine sign of his greatness and gave their fallen foe a proper burial.

In truth there is no knowing the details of Yermak's death or the site of his final resting place, if he was ever buried at all. But the legend survived in chronicles and folk songs.



A 19th-century illustration shows Yermak's heroic last stand



Tsar Ivan IV, or Ivan the Terrible, reigned over the start of the Conquest of Siberia

a voyage into Siberia would have been a step into the unknown. It dwarfed the size of Russia – to this day it accounts for three-quarters of Russia's land mass.

The first major push eastwards had come in 1552 when Ivan, the first to be proclaimed as tsar, had crushed the khanate of Kazan, which allowed the Stroganovs to establish themselves at the forefront of any future expeditions into Siberia. Kuchum, a descendent of the mighty Mongol Empire builder Genghis Khan and ruler of the Islamic khanate of Sibir for nearly 20 years, stood in their way.

Yermak and his Cossacks were hired to take on Kuchum in the name of the tsar and the interests of the Stroganovs. Nikita and Maksim Stroganov reportedly spent a small fortune of 20,000 roubles equipping them with weapons and stores, as well as providing 300 men. In all, Yermak set off sometime between 1579 and 1582 with 840 men – a small force compared to the thousands of warriors that awaited them.

Travelling in boats, the journey would have been fraught with peril as the Cossacks snaked their way down unknown rivers until they entered Kuchum's territory. They faced frequent, sudden attacks from the shore – the high sides of the boats helped protect them from arrows – and would occasionally have to get out and lug everything they brought over land if they couldn't find a route from one river to the next. It would take months, but Yermak eventually reached the heart of the Sibir khanate, the capital of Qashliq.

Yet for the arduousness of the journey, the fighting would be surprisingly swift and decisive. The battle for Qashliq took place in October or November 1582, and despite Yermak's forces being much smaller and disadvantaged on enemy soil, Kuchum had no chance whatsoever. The reason was the superiority of the weapons wielded by the Cossacks – they had muskets and sabres to the Tatars' bows and spears – and the experience

of their ataman. As Qashliq's fortifications were in disrepair, Kuchum's army, led by his nephew Mahmet-kul, fought not from behind the walls but on the banks of the Irtysh River. This suited the battle-hardened Cossacks.

At the Battle of Chuvash Cape, Yermak and his warriors swept aside wave after wave of Tatar attacks with musket fire until Mahmet-kul was injured and his forces lost heart and retreated. Yermak went on to capture the abandoned Qashliq in a moment that marked the conquest of Siberia. It would be celebrated in the Stroganov chronicle with a certainly fabricated account of what Kuchum, who had fled when he saw the battle was lost, had supposedly cried out: "The Stroganovs sent men of the common people against me from their forts to avenge on me the evil I had inflicted," it read.

"Yermak came upon us, defeated us and did us such great harm... For I with joy seized what was not mine, I waged war on the Russian land. But now I have been deprived of all I had and I have myself been defeated. For there is no gladness on earth that does not turn to grief." Kuchum made for the steppes of Siberia in the hope of regrouping, but the defeat was a total humiliation.

From a band of warriors better suited to robbing and raiding, the Cossacks were now conquerors. Yermak wasted no time in sending news back to Moscow to inform the tsar. Ivan had been displeased at the Cossack incursion into Siberia, as Russia was just getting out of the long and bitter Livonian War to the west. He feared that Yermak would spark another conflict to the east. He even sent instructions for the Cossacks to return to Russia. When the news arrived of the capture of Qashliq – as well as sacks and sacks of pelts retrieved from the city, each one a kingly gift on its own – his mood instantly changed. A delighted Ivan pardoned the Cossacks of crimes done in Russia and sent Yermak rewards of fine cloth and



It's not known what Yermak looked like; every portrait is a guess

Russians rush east



cash. According to legend, he also sent the great conqueror an exquisite set of chain mail.

Yermak was now a rich man with the gratitude of the tsar himself, but the situation in Siberia was far from secure. The following year saw more tribes and towns fall to Yermak, and the Russian influence in the khanate seemed to be taking hold. As time went on, however, stores ran low and Tatar resistance fermented. By the time winter approached, conditions were bleak. By the time Ivan sent reinforcements, Cossack numbers had dwindled, and food became so scarce that one chronicle claims that they had to resort to eating the bodies of the dead.

Kuchum rallied and grew bolder until he was finally ready to take his revenge on the man who had captured his capital. His warriors, who had been stalking Yermak and his small group of remaining Cossacks, ambushed them as they slept. They snuck into the camp on the side of a river and pounced before the enemy knew what was happening. In his attempt to get to a boat and escape, Yermak perished.

Suddenly the conquest of Siberia was in doubt. Without their talismanic ataman, the surviving Cossacks' will to hold out evaporated, and they returned to Russia, allowing the Tatars to retake the city of Qashliq. But the legend of Yermak could not so simply be forgotten. He was already becoming a national hero, with one archbishop making an attempt to have him canonised for his efforts in invading a Muslim domain. Perhaps more than that, Yermak had changed Siberia from an otherworldly land beyond reach into an attainable conquest.

What happened next?

Following Yermak's death, the disheartened Cossacks left Siberia, only to turn back when they met reinforcements sent by the tsar on the way. They found that the Tatars had reoccupied the city of Qashliq, so decided not to try and capture it again by force, but to establish a settlement nearby. From then on they had a base in Siberia from which traders – and a larger number of Cossacks – could begin their move east.

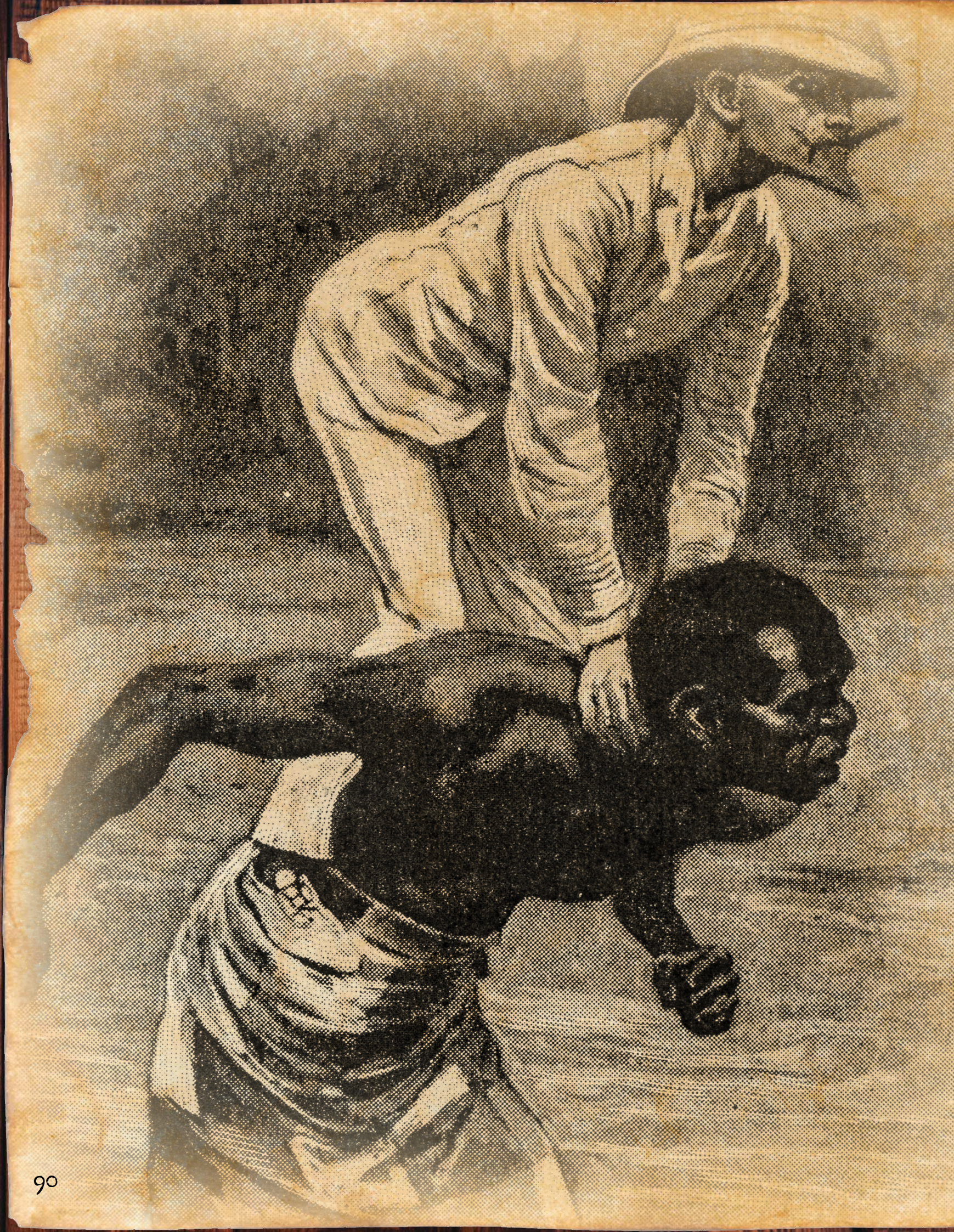
The Stroganovs, the wealthy family that launched Yermak's expedition, funded the Russian expansion, building towns and forts and setting up trade routes in return for a tax exemption for 20 years. That settlement, which they called Tobolsk, became the centre of a burgeoning and highly lucrative fur trade. The Russians would eventually end the khanate of Sibir by defeating Kuchum in 1598 and continued an unstoppable march east until, by the mid-17th century, they had reached the Pacific Ocean.



Image source: Getty Images

Image source: Getty Images

Image source: Getty Images





AFRICA

Though North Africa had always appeared on European maps, the African interior was a world of uncertainty. Europeans found it extended deep into the ocean — and they plundered Africa as they explored it



Financer-in-chief

Henry the Navigator

The endeavours funded by Portugal's Prince Henry, 'the Navigator', have long been regarded as the bedrock for Europe's age of global expansion

It was in August 1415 that the small, poverty-gripped country of Portugal - only recently unshackled from the grip of its mighty neighbour Castile - shocked the European superpowers. A fleet of Portuguese ships had sailed

across the Straits of Gibraltar and sacked the Muslim port of Ceuta on the Moroccan coast. This burgeoning city was the flower of Islamic North Africa, and the gateway to the exotic lands beyond. And yet just three days after its capture, the city was awash with blood, its rich hoards of gold locked up in Portuguese coffers and the invaders revelling in the material and spiritual rewards of crusade. The tiny nation, its kings so poor they were unable to mint their own coinage, had served notice. Portugal was on the rise.

King João I (or King John), more flamboyantly known as 'John the Bastard', had ensured that his three sons took part in the siege and sacking of the city and it was here, as his countrymen bathed their hands in the blood of the infidel, that

Prince Henrique (or Henry) first clapped eyes on the enormous bounty that might be his nation's harvest if it could venture deeper into the 'Dark Continent'. If King John's sacking of Ceuta acted as the foundation stone of Portuguese expansion, it was his son Henry's expeditions that built the pillars of empire.

Henry was born in 1394 to King John and the English noblewoman Philippa of Lancaster, daughter of the pivotal Plantagenet figure John of Gaunt. Though contemporary biographers skimmed over much of Henry's youth, it is clear that his mother taught him to admire the knightly achievements of his Plantagenet forbearers, who had done so much to boost

English prestige in Europe.

All three of her sons selected Anglo-Norman mottos, Henry's choice of 'Talent de bien fere' - translating as 'a hunger to perform worthy deeds' - demonstrating his interest in the chivalric code. Crusade would forever remain close to his heart.

In February 1416, King John appointed Henry to oversee all matters pertaining to the defence

Henry overlooked
race, religion
and creed when
assembling the
scholars and savants
to further push
Portuguese expansion

HENRY THE NAVIGATOR

1394- 1460

The Portuguese prince is famed for his patronage of voyages of discovery among the Atlantic islands as well as along the western coast of Africa. The epithet 'Navigator,' bestowed upon him by English writers, is actually a misnomer; although it is true he had a keen interest in cartography, he did not actually sail upon any of his voyages.

Henry the Navigator



and governance of Ceuta, an important move as Henry now had a vested interest in a world to which most European princes never came into direct contact. When the allied Muslim armies of Morocco and Granada joined forces in a bid to retake the city, Henry set sail with a heavily armed relief force, though the Portuguese garrison had already sent the besiegers packing by the time he arrived. Still, the enterprise reinforced Henry's crusading zeal.

He yearned to take Granada and history suggests the funds he received from the crown to maintain Ceuta were spent as he saw fit, with the monies not necessarily going toward administrative matters such as keeping the city war-ready. Instead, Henry regarded action against the infidel as part of his remit, whether that was to fund his corsairs against Moorish shipping or to send his caravels down the African coast.

Henry received a further boost in 1420, when his father received papal permission to bring his country's military crusading order under control of the crown. Portugal no longer had a border with Islam and the crusading orders' wealth would be a huge boon to the royal coffers. One particular group, the elite Order of Christ, came under Henry's direct administrative control. This order was the heir to the Portuguese Knights Templar and to be the administrative head of such an illustrious band fitted well with Henry's self-perception as chivalrous knight errant. It also provided him with a nice stash of extra funds he could divert to fuel his own ambitions.

Indeed, it was not long after he took administrative control of the order that Henry shocked the members of the royal court by announcing he had been studying charts of the 'Ocean Sea', the Atlantic, expressing particular interest in two archipelagos that lay off the coast of North Africa, the Canary Islands and the group of islands around Madeira. The reasons for Henry's interest in exploration are unclear - up until this point, his great passion had been for further incursions against Islam - though it seems probable that the augmentation of his wealth and personal fame were more likely motivations than scientific enquiry.

The Canary Islands had already fallen within the compass of European interest, with the indigenous population and Christian colonists living under the protection of Castile, though this brooked little credence with Henry, who in 1424 despatched a substantial military invasion force. Claims that he hoped to convert the pagan inhabitants to Christianity seems rather far-fetched and similar assertions during his slave missions to Guinea in the years to come suggests a more



Henry's mother, Philippa of Lancaster, secured the Anglo-Portuguese alliance with her marriage to John I

Image source: Wiki

sinister motivation. It would not have been the first time that Europeans had sent slaving missions to the Canaries.

As it transpired, the expedition proved a failure, the primitively armed inhabitants fighting off the Portuguese to Henry's great embarrassment. The defeat did not diminish the prince's desire to establish a foothold in the Canaries and he would fight a number of unsuccessful wars over the islands across the proceeding 30 years.

His activities in Madeira, on the other hand, proved more successful, not least because they were uninhabited. According to Henry's enthusiastic chronicler Zurara, it was his squires Zarco and Teixeira who discovered Madeira and the neighbouring island of Porto Santo, though really these were a re-discovery at best. It is thought

that the first Portuguese colonists arrived around 1425 and on Madeira they discovered fine soil. The early years of colonialism were marked by successful cultivation.

Henry's interest in the Atlantic islands remained a constant and in 1439 he successfully petitioned the crown to send settlers to the Azores, a group of seven islands that tradition binds to Henry with an earlier expedition that had set out in 1425. As with Madeira, the colony prospered.



While success on the Atlantic islands warmed Henry's heart, his biggest ambitions lay further south where he hoped to "sail beyond the sunset and baths of all the Western stars." Between 1425 and 1434 he sent missions down the west coast of Africa with instructions to break new ground by sailing beyond the limit of European knowledge, which terminated at Cape Bojador. The cape bulged into the Atlantic around 1,000 miles southwest of Tangier and 100 miles south of the Canaries. It possessed an almost mystical reputation, shrouded in rumour and legend.

Here, the cliffs crumbled into the sea, currents clashed to form great whirlpools, while silver fish shimmered beneath the surface. Waves slammed against the reefs and the inland desert looked as barren as the underworld itself. For many mariners Cape Bojador was the Cape of No Return. Henry, however, was having none of it. He was convinced that the Cape could be surpassed and he despatched no fewer than 15 expeditions. They all failed.

It took a determined squire from Henry's own household, Eannes, to prove his prince correct. Henry charted yet another course for his squire. Eannes, on seeing the shoals and spray and shimmering sardines of Bojador, would turn west and sail further out into the ocean. Only when he'd travelled beyond the impassable cape would he turn east and approach land. And so he did, disembarking in safety and collecting a few bedraggled plants from the Saharan shore before charting his course back home. On arrival back in Portugal he received a hero's welcome.

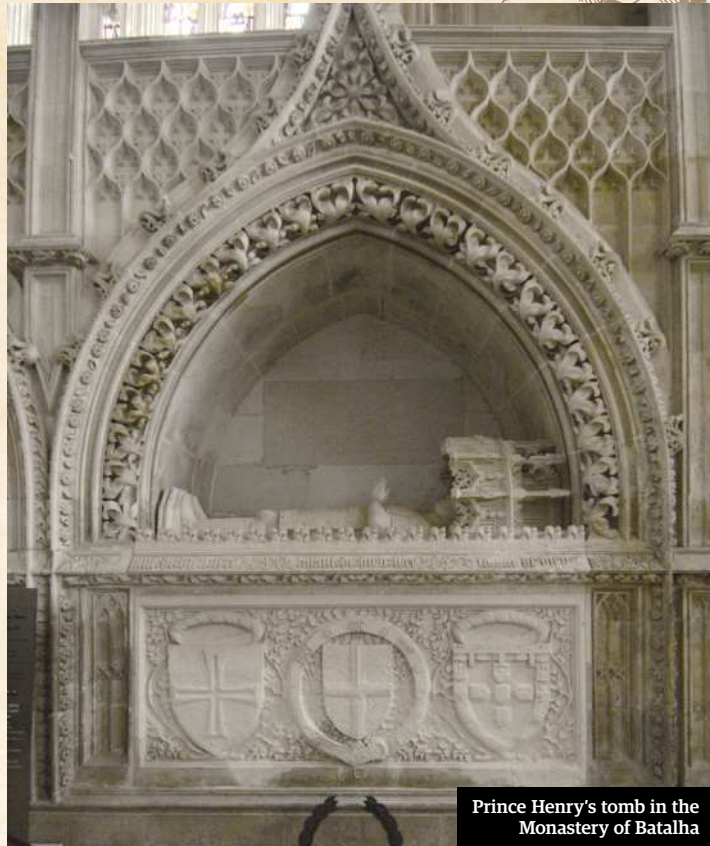
The hagiographic Chronicle of Guinea records Prince Henry's horoscope as a key contributor to his interest in oceanic discovery





The Monument to the Discoveries was created to commemorate 500 years since Henry's death

Image source: Getty Images



Prince Henry's tomb in the Monastery of Batalha

Image source: Wiki

“It became commonplace for Henry’s men to try and capture native tribesmen”

Henry's successful prediction earned the prince high praise and his reputation as a cartographer and cosmologist was established, in Portugal at least. Scholars now believe that Henry's confidence in the rounding of Bojador was prompted by his reading of the Book Of The Known World, an anonymous and entirely fictitious account of a Castilian's adventures that were guided by a world map now lost. Like many contemporaries, Henry most likely bestowed upon this book high credence and it contained more than one reference to the author's travels beyond the rocky desert cape.

Henry was now in a position to send more expeditions beyond Bojador where, he hoped, they could deposit armies to march inland under the banner of crusade and take the word of God to the pagan tribes. He even hoped to find the fabled Prester John, Christian emperor of the Indies (which in Henry's day referred to the lands of north east Africa), and forging an alliance against their Saracen enemies. Henry's dreams of finding the mythical ruler persisted throughout his life and no doubt figured in his explorations.

These aspirations were temporarily suspended, however, following a traumatic campaign in Tangier, and complications of regency demanded in the aftermath of the death of his brother, King Duarte. It was not until 1441 that Henry resumed exploration down the West African coast. Some captains were sent to resume exploration

around Rio de Oro, the furthest point yet reached following the passing of Bojador. Here they might collect the skin and oil of the sea-lions that were known to inhabit the area.

Other captains were ordered to head even further south and they soon found Cape Blanco (Mauritania) and explored the great bay that it enclosed.

With papal and royal consent, Henry also continued his crusading ambitions and his chronicler records with gusto the deeds of arms of the Portuguese

troops who were set ashore during the 1440s, though to the modern mind the notion of heavily armed and well-trained European troops laying into scantily armed fishermen and nomads appears less than chivalrous. It became

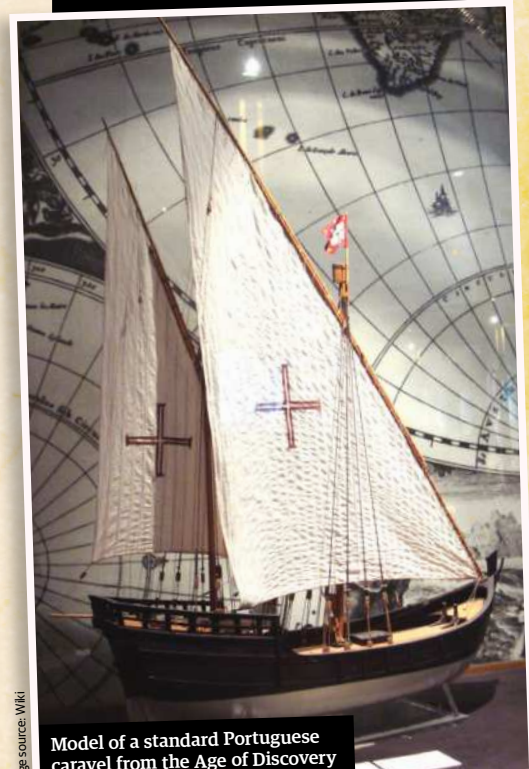
Henry's older brother, Pedro, travelled in Europe and acquired a translation of Marco Polo's travelogue for him

The caravels of conquest

“The caravels of Portugal being the best ships that travel the seas under sail,” wrote Cadamosto, the Italian explorer who travelled often under Henry's patronage. “They could sail anywhere.” And, certainly, they proved instrumental in Portuguese expansion overseas.

One of the great impediments to exploration of the West African coast were the north-westerly winds that hampered the return journey. The caravel, however, could circumnavigate this problem courtesy of its rig which saw its lateen, or triangular, sails suspended from a long yard attached obliquely to the mast. This enabled the caravel to sail far closer to the wind, and to be able to respond to much lighter breezes than the traditional, square-rigged vessels.

The caravel's hull was smooth, rather than comprised of overlapping logs, and was much slimmer than traditional vessels. Its slender draught made it ideal for negotiating the notorious shallows of the Arguin Bank, and for nudging up the African river systems. Its speed was also a boon when bidding to escape malevolent corsairs. The majority of caravels used by Henry's men had a capacity of around 40 or 50 tons and many were equipped with cannon. Folklore and superstition also saw the Portuguese caravels painted with an eye on each side of the prow. It is said that many African natives believed these painted eyes to be the mechanism behind the ships' ready navigation of unknown and uncharted waters.



Model of a standard Portuguese caravel from the Age of Discovery

Image source: Wiki

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commonplace for Henry's men to try and capture native tribesmen for interrogation as the prince sought information about the coast and the deserts that marked its shoreline.

In 1444, however, these missions took a darker turn as one mission that year was despatched with a specific and more sinister design. Six ships, organised by Henry's henchman Lancarote da Ilha, sailed with orders to take slaves from the islands of the Arguin Bank, just south of Cape Blanco. It was Lancarote da Ilha who funded the expedition, rather than the prince, but he required Henry's consent and, therefore, his complicity. The chronicler Zurara attended the auction of these slaves in August 1444 and recorded both human misery as well as lavish spectacle.

Henry's involvement with the slave trade has long troubled his biographers. Apologists, such as Zurara, point to Henry's desire to convert these people to Christianity, while others suggest a validity fostered by the Africans' status as prisoners of war; both the Venetians and Genoese practised slavery while the Moors regularly sold their prisoners into servitude. Even the lauded crusaders of Outremer employed captured Muslims as labourers. However Henry chose to justify his actions, the economic benefit was palpable and fuelled further exploration.

One such mission was that of João Fernandes who set sail in 1445 on a mission with no slaving implications. Fernandes was to be dropped on the Rio de Oro to spend an entire winter exploring inland. After many adventures he returned to Portugal with news of fertile lands to the south, rich in people and gold dust. The previous year, Dinis Dias reached Cape Verde while Nuno Tristao in 1446 arrived at the mouth of the Gambia River.

During the following decade, the likes of Alvise Cadamosto, an Italian explorer on Henry's payroll, and Diogo Gomes, made further journeys down the African coast. Below Cape Verde they pierced the lands south of the Sahara on the Guinea Coast and Henry believed, or certainly hoped, that his ships would soon round the continent's southern tip and head towards the silk-rich spice lands he'd read in *The Travels Of Marco Polo*.

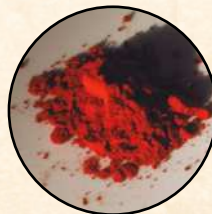
As it transpired, Henry's crusading ambitions closer to home dominated his final years as he sought once more to wage war against the infidel in Morocco, though his interest in African voyages did not flag entirely. It was not until Henry's death in 1460 that Portugal's interest in the African coast faltered, though it soon gathered momentum once more in the 1480s when Prince João ascended the throne. Under his auspices, explorers went even further south, such as Diogo Cao in 1482 when he discovered the Congo River. Six years later, Bartolomeu Dias finally reached the southern tip of the continent at the Cape of Good Hope.

The failed 1437 crusade against Tangier saw Henry's brother, Fernando, left behind as hostage. His death haunted Henry



BOUNTY FROM THE AFRICAN COAST

The African continent was the source of many treasures coveted by European traders and citizens



1. SLAVES

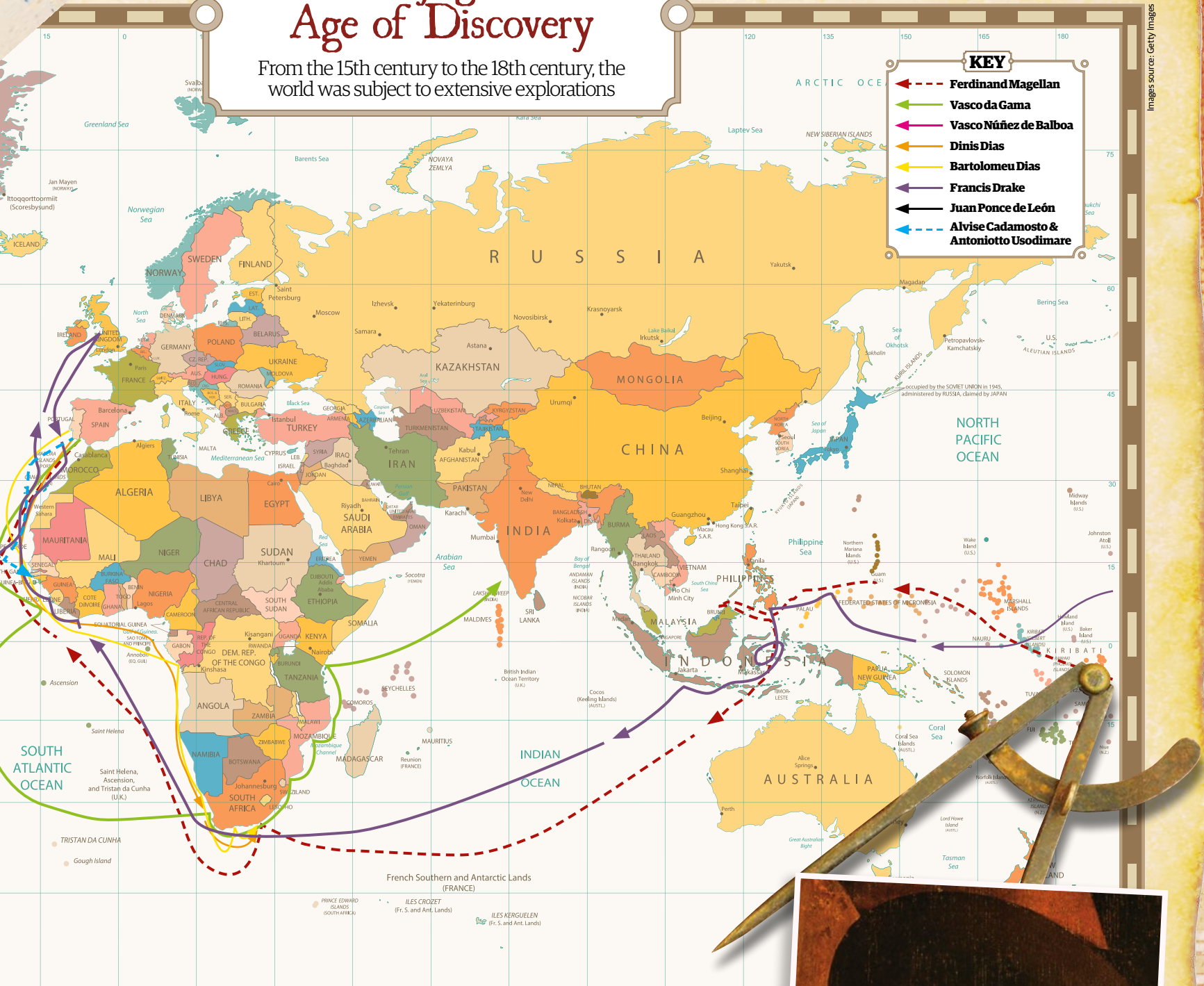
The Portuguese trade in slaves had become sufficiently established for Henry to order the building of a fort and warehouse on Arguin Island by 1448.

2. DRAGON'S BLOOD

This valuable resin from the dragon tree proved a useful commodity, prompting many visits to the Canaries. It was widely used in the dyeing industry.

Major Voyages in the Age of Discovery

From the 15th century to the 18th century, the world was subject to extensive explorations



Images source: Getty Images

3. SPICES

During Henry's time, the term 'spice' covered a broad range of medicinal drugs, perfumes and cosmetics, though it was mainly used to describe seasonings, such as pepper (pictured).



4. GOLD

Gold was a key motivator in so much overseas expansion. In Henry's era, it usually arrived in Europe via camel caravan from the alluvial mines beyond the Sahara in Guinea.



Images source: Wiki

Eastward Ho!

Bartolomeu Dias

Bartolomeu Dias' voyage round the southern tip of Africa opened up the Indian Ocean to European sailors

— Written by Edoardo Albert —

For 60 years the Portuguese, under Prince Henry the Navigator and then King John II, had mounted a consistent and continuing effort to find a way to the East that did not involve trading through the middlemen of Venice and Genoa, and a route that outflanked the blocking presence of Muslim powers in the Middle East. The only way to do that was to go around Africa. But the problem with that idea was that according to Ptolemy, the foremost geographer of the classical world, the Indian Ocean - the source of spice and silk and riches - was landlocked. There was no direct sailing route to it.

However, the Portuguese did not believe this. Having invented the caravel, a lateen-sailed ship of unparalleled manoeuvrability and seaworthiness, they had already discovered the Azores and Madeira, islands unknown to antiquity. Now, with the encouragement of Henry and John, a succession of Portuguese expeditions made their way south, following the west coast of Africa and planting stone columns on prominent headlands to mark the southern limit of their

sailing. In 1486 Diogo Cão had discovered the Congo River. Soon after he made it as far south as Namibia. But the coast of Africa seemed to stretch on without end, as Ptolemy averred, and the winds along the coast of Namibia and Angola blew against their further progress. The ships were battling a constant north-flowing current too.

But having reached so far south, King John was determined to find the route to the Indian Ocean he and his geographers were certain existed. In October 1486 the king gave Bartolomeu Dias, one of his squires, command of an expedition consisting of two caravels and a square-rigged cog that could carry provisions for the long-distance expedition. Dias, a skilled seaman in his own right, recruited the best pilots and navigators he could find.

Their intrepid expedition set sail in July or August 1487.

By Christmas Day the little flotilla of ships had passed the previous southern limit of Portuguese exploration. But the expedition struggled against a southwest wind that blew them towards the shore and a steady current pushing them back north. The square-rigged cog was less suited to make headway against wind and current, so Dias decided

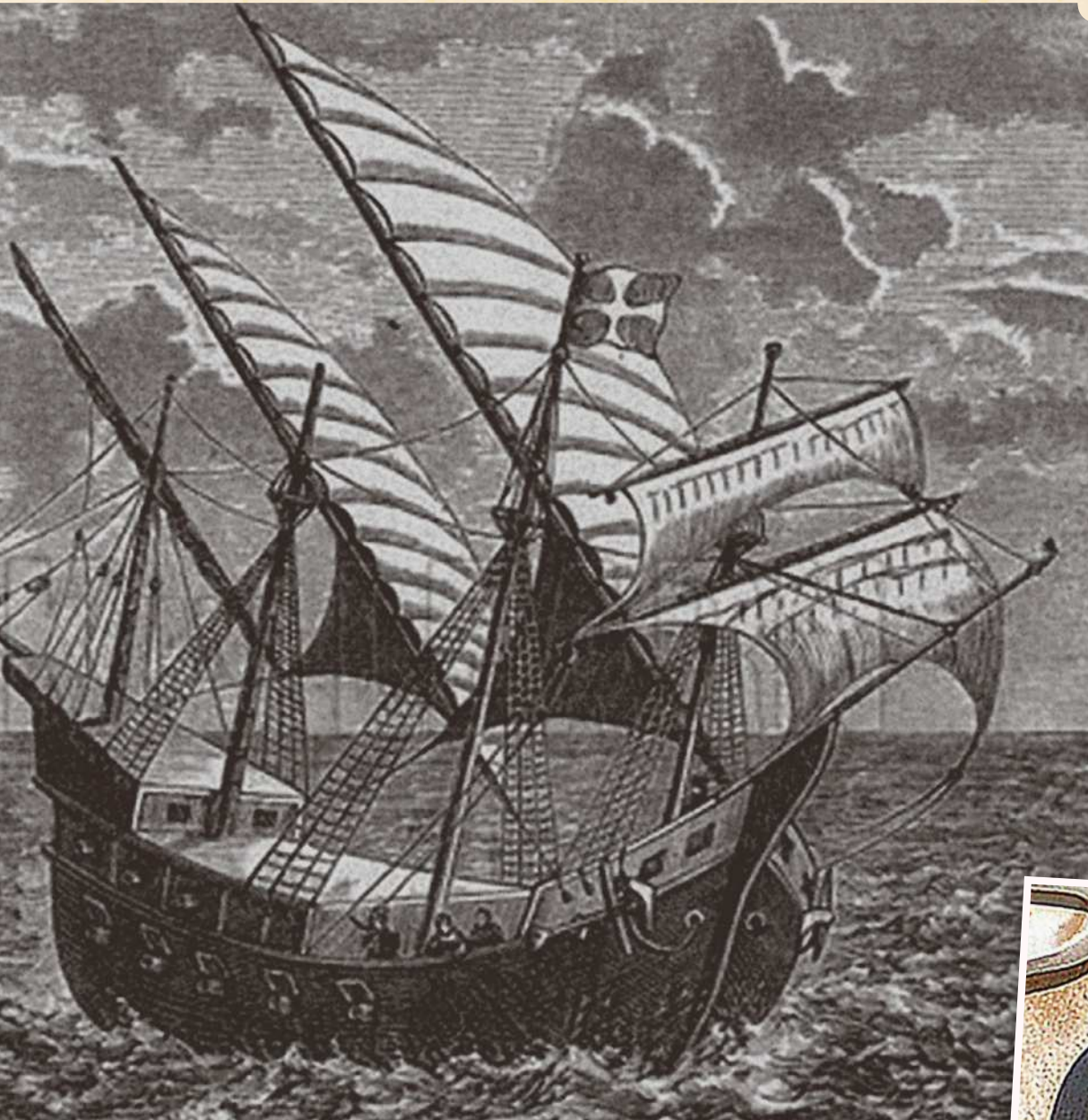
Bartolomeu Dias, the lesser known of the two explorers who revolutionised European understanding of the geography of the world



An illustration of the two caravels in which Bartolomeu Dias rounded the Cape of Good Hope

that it would moor on the shore of what is today Namibia. Dias pushed on south with his two caravels. The two ships crawled southwards, tacking back and forth against the wind and pushed back by the current. And then, after a few days of little progress, they did something extraordinary. They turned west. They sailed out into the empty ocean, directly away from land and at a right angle to the direction they actually wanted to go. Two small caravels, neither longer than 18 metres, headed into the swell of the open Atlantic.

There's no record whether this was an inspired call by Dias or a strategy worked out back in Portugal with John's geographers. But whatever the reason for the decision, the little expedition continued sailing southwest for 13 days and a thousand miles. The temperature dropped precipitously, but then the winds changed. Dias turned east. But even after days of running before the wind, there was still no sign of land. Finally,



The spy on the land

King John II didn't just send ships: he sent spies. In particular Pêro da Covilhã, a low-born but multilingual adventurer. Covilhã, with letters of exchange to pay his way, made his way to Alexandria, the entry port to the Islamic world. Then, passing himself off as a Muslim merchant, he made his way to Cairo and then onto Aden, where he took ship on a dhow across the Indian Ocean, arriving in Calicut, India. Taking notes on the Indian Ocean spice trade, Covilhã then returned to Cairo where he met emissaries sent by John II, giving them his report. Now apparently bitten by wanderlust, Covilhã explored Arabia, even entering Mecca and Medina in disguise as a Muslim pilgrim before venturing across the Red Sea to Mount Sinai. From there the indefatigable Covilhã headed to Ethiopia, the Christian kingdom in the heart of Africa and the probable source of the legends of Prester John. The ruler, Eskender, received Covilhã well, but refused to let him leave. 30 years later a Portuguese embassy met their countryman, still living in the court of the kings of Ethiopia.

Pêro da Covilhã, one of the great unsung explorers of the Age of Discovery

“Dias had sailed around the tip of Africa and opened up the Indian Ocean to the Portuguese”

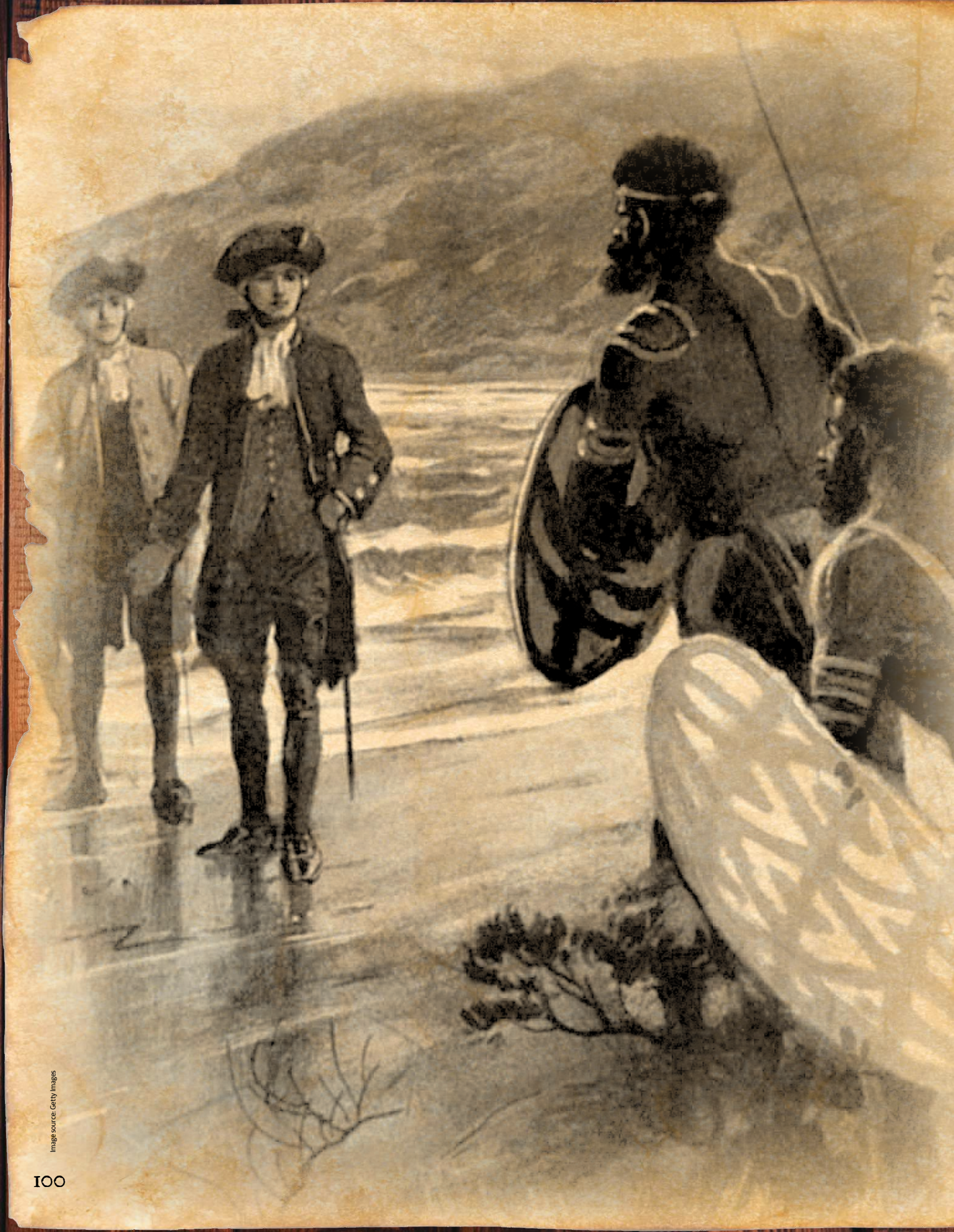
Dias turned north again. At the end of January, the lookout saw distant ridges. On 3 February 1488, the ships made land at what is today called Mossel Bay. Although they didn't know it yet, the great, wide loop they had sailed had carried them past the southern tip of Africa and into the Indian Ocean. The expedition continued sailing, following the coast further along so Dias could be sure this was not another bay, like the Bay of Guinea that had fooled previous explorers into thinking they had come to the end of Africa.

By the middle of March, with supplies running out and the coast continuing to run

northeast, Dias decided he was sure. He had sailed around the tip of Africa and opened up the Indian Ocean to the Portuguese. Turning back, Dias spotted the Cape of Good Hope on his return journey. The voyage north was aided by the current and the prevailing winds, but returning to their supply ship, only three of the nine men left to guard it were still alive. Burning the cog as it was no longer seaworthy, the surviving men transferred to Dias' ships and set off for home, reaching Portugal in December 1488. Dias' voyage ranks alongside Columbus' discovery of America as the most important voyage of the Age of Discovery.



Image source: Getty, Wiki





OCEANIA

Home to some of the world's oldest continual civilisations, the arrival of Europeans spelled disaster for many Antipodeans. They frequently brought disease, death and destruction



The Great Land to the South

How the World Discovered Australia

The promise of a great southern land captivated sailors, pirates, merchants, kings and even popes. Discover how strong winds, astral bodies, religious fervour and economics led us to Australia



On 20 August 1770, the flag of Great Britain was hoisted over the silver sands to flutter in the breeze. Three volleys were fired by the landing party, and then answered by the Bark Endeavour, moored in the bay.

James Cook and his crew had been at sea for 724 days with Plymouth a distant memory, and it had been 141 days since they had left New Zealand behind. Less than 100-strong, a tiny ship in a vast ocean, they had mapped the coastline, every island and inlet, before tacking west to Van Diemen's Land, then north in search of the eastern coast of Terra Australis Incognita - the unknown land of the south - promised in his sealed orders.

Ostensibly in the Pacific to witness the rare transit of Venus across the sun, theirs was a

swashbuckling secret mission in the name of discovery, with a royal warrant to claim unsettled lands for the crown, and record alien sights and skies for science. When explorer, astronomer and enlightenment hero Lieutenant James Cook stepped ashore and claimed the great southern land for Britain - naming the whole eastern chunk of this vast continent New South Wales in the process - he wasn't discovering a new world so much as he was meeting an old friend.

The dream of Australia had dominated the European exploration of Asia for 400 years, and had been a myth of Atlantean proportions for much longer. Cook wasn't the first to arrive, flag in hand, and stretched out before him was a road paved with shipwreck, war, spice and piracy, but first, there had to be the idea itself.

Perth •

How the world discovered Australia



Western Australia

Captain: William Dampier
Ship: HMS Roebuck
Nationality: English
Date Of Discovery: 26 July 1699



Northern Australia

Captain: Willem Janszoon
Ship: Duyfken
Nationality: Dutch
Date Of Discovery: 26 February 1606

Arafura Sea

Timor Sea

• Darwin

Indian Ocean

Coral Sea



Eastern Australia

Captain: James Cook
Ship: HM Bark Endeavour
Nationality: English
Date Of Discovery: 20 August 1770



New Holland

Australia

• Brisbane



Western Australia

Captain: Dirk Hartog
Ship: Eendracht
Nationality: Dutch
Date Of Discovery: 25 October 1616



New South Wales

• Adelaide

• Sydney

• Canberra



Tasmania

Captain: Abel Tasman
Ships: Heemskerck and Zeehaen
Nationality: Dutch
Date Of Discovery: 24 November 1642

Tasman Sea

Key

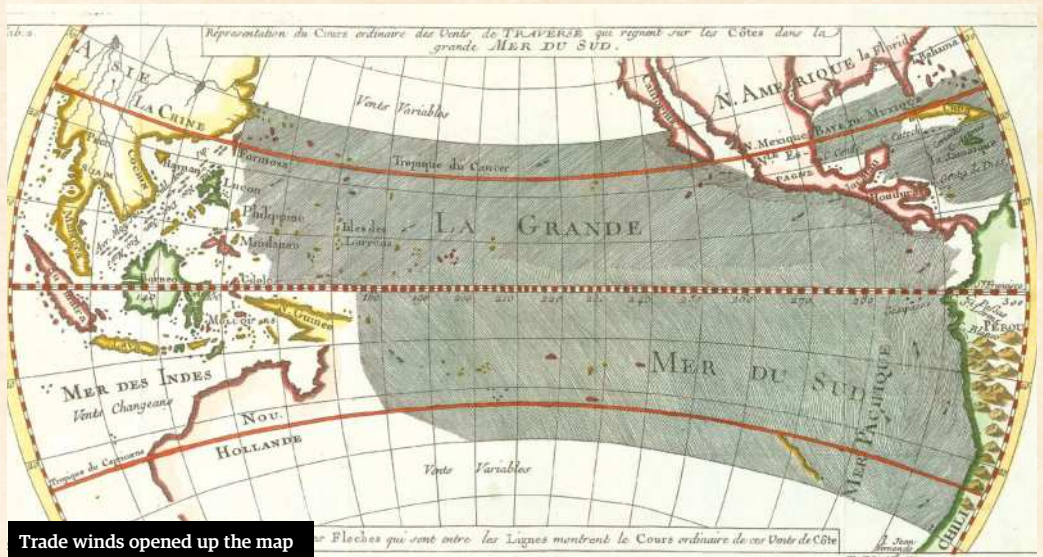
- William Janszoon (1606)
- Dirk Hartog (1616)
- Abel Tasman (1642)
- William Dampier (1699)
- James Cook (1770)

Great Southern Ocean

Age of Discovery

15,913 kilometres (9,888 miles) and well over 1,000 years away, Pythagoras set light to Cook's imagination. Around 530 BCE, the Methuselah of mathematics had decamped to Croton in modern Italy to escape the tyranny in his Greek island homeland of Samos. Travelling widely from Egypt to India before founding his school of ideas and gathering his followers, he put his experiences to work, devising the theorem that bears his name. Pythagoras was also credited with the notion that our world was a sphere, and so there had to be a vast landmass to the south to balance this orb. Two centuries later, Aristotle advanced this theory based on the circular shadow of the Earth during a lunar eclipse and the changing places of constellations the further south you sailed. In the wake of Aristotle's studies of the night sky, the Roman geographer Pomponius Mela (1st century) produced maps dividing the world into northern and southern zones, and later the Greco-Roman astrologer, astronomer, geographer and all-round busy thinker Claudius Ptolemy (90-168 CE) compiled all the knowledge that he could of the world's regions into his immense *Geographia*, adding that the route to the great southern land was no doubt impassable due to "monstrosities."

The idea of this vast new expanse - Terra Australis - took root in the foundation of Renaissance geography and cartography, until every map came with a vaguely defined great southern land. Just as Cook's 1768 mission - a fact-finding expedition for the Royal Society of London - came with its sealed orders to increase the reach of the British Empire, it was politics and economics that set his spiritual predecessors off on their voyages of discovery.



Trade winds opened up the map

"The dream of Australia dominated European exploration of Asia for 400 years, and had been a myth of Atlantean proportions much longer"

In 1368, the mighty Mongol Empire, that stretched from Eastern Europe to the Sea of Japan, collapsed, ruling out the overland journey to the riches of China and India. The surprisingly cordial relationship between the Khan and the Pope was replaced by tensions between Christian Europe and the rising Islamic Ottoman Empire, which closed the overland routes to the east. Their hand forced by demand for spices, silk, tea and porcelain, the mercantile nations - the Portuguese and Spanish at first, and then the Dutch, French and English - began to look for sea routes into the Indian Ocean and beyond.

While the European superpowers began to look upon their maps and globes anew, the powerful Tamil merchant dynasties of Sri Lanka established their own maritime trade empire that stretched its fingers across South East Asia between the 9th and 14th centuries. Their holds stuffed with the luxuries of India, and the traditional Tamil proverb "cross the oceans and acquire gold" on their lips, they made their presence felt through art and architecture in Thailand, Java, Malaysia, Vietnam and Cambodia. By the 18th century - though their once great empire had declined, replaced by colonial Portuguese, and then Dutch and British - Tamils were trading with the European settlers in New Zealand and Australia. Yet there's evidence to suggest that they'd been there before: a 14th century ship's bell, beautifully inscribed in Tamil, found in 1836 being used as a Māori cooking pot.

Now locked in a mercantile Cold War, following a belligerent race for territory and trade across the gradually opening globe, the Portuguese and Spanish reached a frosty impasse with 1494's

Treaty of Tordesillas, dividing North and South America between them, and then 1529's Treaty of Zaragoza which divided Asia.

The Portuguese crown had rolled across East Africa, India and into Malaysia, with the city of Malacca and the nutmeg and clove-rich Spice Islands of the Banda Sea at the centre of their interests. They even set up a trading post on the island of Timor in 1590, only 720 kilometres (448 miles) from what is now Darwin in the Northern Territories. Claiming much of Asia as their own and setting the rival Spanish up for a future toehold in the spice-free Philippines, and precious little else, the Zaragoza line neatly bisected New Guinea, and though they may not have known it, also that fabled Terra Australis Incognita.

With the support of Pope Clement VIII and King Phillip III, Pedro Fernandez de Queirós set off from Peru in 1603 with three ships to find and claim Terra Australis for Spain. Leaving navigation "to the Will of God" and landing on Vanuatu, just west of Fiji - mistaking it for his prize - he dubbed it La Austrialia del Espíritu Santo, the Southern Land of the Holy Spirit, before attempting to found a colony called Nova Jerusalem (and a holy order, the Knights of the Holy Ghost, to protect it). Nova Jerusalem collapsed ignominiously through the hostility of the Ni-Vanuatu and his own crew.

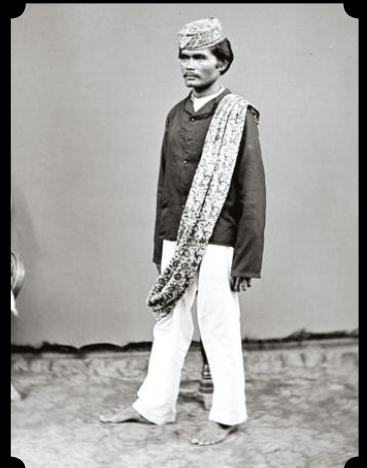
Ironically, it was actually de Queirós's second-in-command, Luís Vaz de Torres, who came the closest to realising his dream. Separated from de Queirós, de Torres led the two remaining ships to Manila. When winds forced him south of New Guinea instead of north, he and his crew became the first recorded seamen to navigate the strait that now bears his name, dividing New Guinea in



Janszoon's 'little dove'

Australia's discovery of the world

While European explorers came closer, Australia's nearer neighbours had reached out for the great southern land, and it had reached back. Between the 16th and 18th centuries (possibly as early as the 12th), Makassan trepangers – sailors from Sulawesi (now part of Indonesia) who harvested sea cucumbers for a Chinese market – traded fishing rights with indigenous Australians for cloth, tobacco, metal axes, knives, rice and gin, and the Aboriginals traded turtle shells, pearls and cypress pine. Some joined Makassan crews to collect trepang. The Makassan legacy ranged from smallpox to new words. With somewhere between 350 and 750 languages or dialects spoken by the same number of Aboriginal tribes, Makassar became the coastal lingua franca. Many words closely related to Javanese and Indonesian are still in use by Aboriginals today. The Makassans may have left the trappings of their faith, too, with some historians arguing that elements of Islam (adopted by Sulawesi in the 15th century) made their way into Aboriginal ceremonies. Contact with the Makassans span the Yolgnu's whole world on its axis, as they became focused on the sea, crafting resilient dugout canoes in Makassan style that allowed them as far out as the Torres Strait Islands and New Guinea. The Torres Strait Islanders themselves crafted outriggers and ocean-going dugouts up to 20 metres long for trade with both the mainland and New Guinea – a practice that continues even now, protected by the Torres Strait Treaty from all customs and border controls.

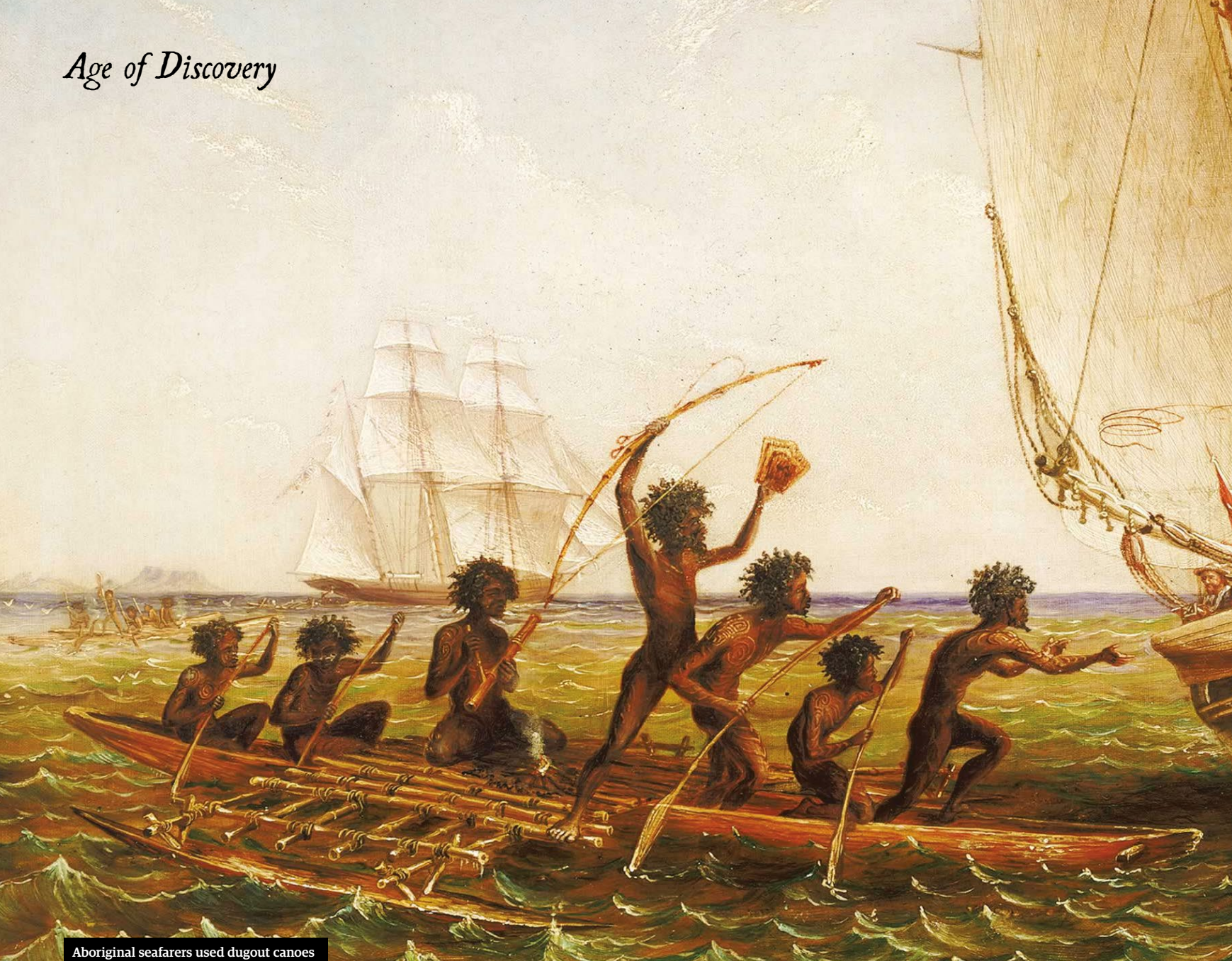


The Makassar people were early traders with indigenous Australians

Image source: Alamy, Getty, Wiki



Only Cook's courage and cool leadership averted complete disaster on his voyage up Australia's east coast



Aboriginal seafarers used dugout canoes

the north from Australia in the south. Though he may not have locked eyes on the great southern land, he came amazingly close.

While de Queirós's divine mission scattered, his masters fared little better. In 1578, the status quo was rocked when King Sebastian I of Portugal died without heir, prompting a Spanish invasion in 1580 that saw King Phillip III's father unite both thrones. Spain gained Portugal's colonial possessions, and those increasingly vulnerable and far-flung Portuguese colonies gained Spain's multitude of enemies. Over the next two decades, England, France and the newly independent Dutch Republic snapped at the Iberian Union's heels in North America, South America, India, Africa and South East Asia - tearing off chunks of land, piece by bloody piece.

In 1605, the Duyfken ('little dove'), its cannons blackened by Spice Islands skirmishes with the Portuguese, sailed from Java, newly fallen under Dutch influence, to explore the coast of New Guinea on behalf of the Dutch East India Company (VOC). Captained by Willem Janszoon, he became the first recorded European to set foot on Australia

in 1606, thinking it was the western coastline of New Guinea (missing the Torres Strait altogether - and it would take Cook, over a century later, to prove that Australia was a separate landmass).

Finding it swampy and inhospitable, the crew of the gently named Duyfken proved themselves anything but, as amicable early encounters with the Aboriginal Australians turned sour when the Dutch abducted some of their women, prompting a cycle of attack and reprisal that forced them back to sea.

Janszoon was followed in 1616 by Dirk Hartog on the Eendracht's maiden voyage. Becoming separated from a VOC fleet crossing the Cape of Good Hope, he took advantage of the 'Roaring Forties' -

powerful westerly winds that could cut a journey shorter by months - and he shot across the Indian Ocean far more southerly than was usually safe. The Eendracht reached Western Australia and left a flattened pewter dinner plate as its testimony.

Thanks largely to VOC's enthusiasm for speed over lives - the company insisted its captains take advantage of the Roaring Forties, regardless of the danger - the Dutch caught sight of Australia many times over the next few decades, gradually shading in more and

more of their maps, with many more of them left smashed against the rocks of Western Australia. The oldest of these wrecks was the Tryall, sunk in 1622 en route to Java from Plymouth and captained by John Brooke. The

The wreck of the Tyrall was rediscovered in 1969, and was then subjected to an illegal salvage operation

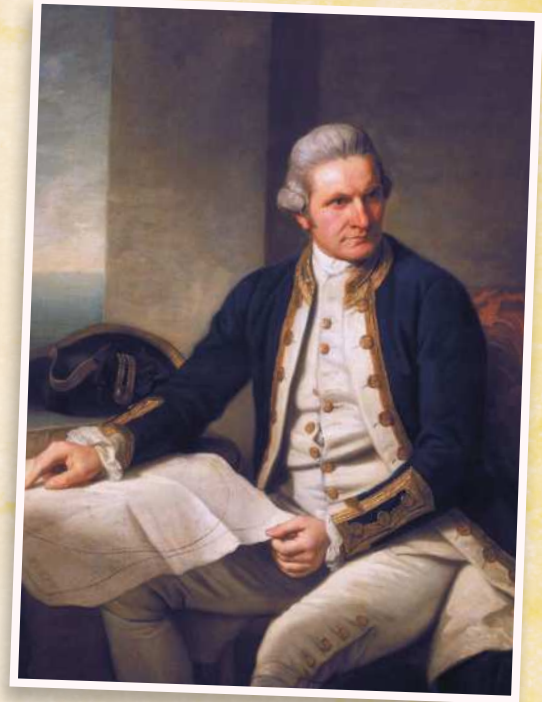


Tasman returned to Australia once more in 1644, mapping the northern shores and choosing the name that would supplant Terra Australis - New Holland. It would survive both Cook and the colony of New South Wales, and only 180 years after Tasman first uttered the name 'New Holland' would it be officially replaced by 'Australia'.

If Abel Tasman was the example that James Cook followed, then William Dampier was the (somewhat dubious) legend that Cook aspired to.

A British buccaneer from humble beginnings, he had circumnavigated the globe a record-breaking three times, writing the bestselling *A New Voyage Round The World* in 1697 and rescuing the man who would become Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe. His adventures impressed the British Admiralty so much that in 1699 - 29 years before Cook's birth - Dampier was given the helm of the HMS *Roebeck*, and a commission to explore New Holland and uncover the eastern coast that would later fall to Cook. Dampier collected an unprecedented catalogue of Australian plants and wildlife before the rotting *Roebeck* began to take on water. After some slipshod repairs allowed them to return home - the east coast mission abandoned - the unlikely naturalist was later marooned on Ascension Island in the heart of the Atlantic Ocean.

Court-martialled for losing the vessel in his charge and deemed "unfit to command any of HM's ships, Dampier promptly returned to the life of a sanctioned Jack Sparrow, but not before releasing *A Voyage To New Holland* in 1699, rich with detail of flora, fauna, rocks and even prevailing winds.



Dolphin, and Captain Phillip Carteret on the HMS *Swallow* in 1766, and then Cook himself in 1769 - all spreading the red, white and blue across a swathe of Pacific islands, the promise of Terra Australis never far from their minds.

As James Cook and his predecessors raced south just as Tasman and Torres had done before them, their French counterparts at their heels, the map of Australia would continue to be shaded in inch by inch. Whether their sails were buffeted by economic, political or imperial forces as much as by the Roaring Forties, their achievements

"The idea of this new expanse took root in the foundation of Renaissance geography and cartography"

Tryall represented an achievement by which Cook could scarcely be inspired - the first Englishman to clap eyes on the great southern land was also the first European to sink within her treacherous currents and rocky depths.

While recklessness had catapulted Europeans onto antipodean shores, the meticulous Abel Tasman was a different breed. He had the ship's carpenter swim ashore to plant the flag, rather than risk a ship on unknown rocks, to claim Van Diemen's Land in 1642 (now known as Tasmania) in honour of Anthony van Diemen, the governor-general of the Dutch East Indies.

Van Diemen had earned that privilege - under his stewardship, the Dutch East Indies became a centre for frantic map-making and territorial expansion, and Tasman was entirely on message with his employer's way of doing things. With so much intricate detail captured through drawings, diaries and maps on his voyage to Tasmania, and then across the Tasman Sea to become the first European to reach New Zealand, Cook used his writings over a century later as a reference, landing in Poverty Bay to claim it for Britain.

Though Dampier had failed in his most strategically important goal - and lost his ship doing so - his voyage pre-empted a paradigm shift, not just in British thinking but in French too. But this took nearly another century to materialise, and it would be politics and profits that saw navigators, botanists, explorer and East Indiamen dispatched with flags for planting. The colonial horse-trading and nation-swapping that closed the Seven Years' War in 1763 saw Spain, France and Britain enter into a stand-off messier and more convoluted than Portugal and Spain in the 15th and 16th centuries. The booming empires had nowhere left to expand but into the unknown.

Naval officers - who, like Cook, had proven their worth in the far-flung theatres of the last war - were dispatched to the Pacific with increasing regularity by a conflict-scale navy with a peacetime surplus of ships, men, money and experience. In quick succession, the Admiralty sent Commodore John Byron in 1765 and then Captain Samuel Wallis in 1766 on the HMS

remain a triumph of reason and discovery. When Cook finally felt Australian sands crunch beneath his feet, it's true that he was building on older expeditions - the writings of Tasman, Dampier and, more recently, Wallis at his hand - as well as the ideas at its heart stretching back to Ancient Greece, but his discoveries would become the foundation for a colony, and eventually a nation.

It would be many more years before European settlers knew that the land Cook had claimed as New South Wales was connected to New Holland, and wasn't connected to Van Diemen's Land, just as it took Cook to prove that these scattered chunks of land weren't connected to New Zealand or New Guinea (thanks in part to the Spanish keeping Torres' voyage to themselves).

Their vessels cutting across unknown oceans and into alien horizons, these men - this cast of thinkers, seafarers, pirates and traders from across centuries - closed a chapter in Australia's long history, and for better and for worse a new one was about to begin.

Land of the Long White Cloud

Voyages to New Zealand

A land formed 90 million years ago that was untouched by humans for all but the last 740. New Zealand surprised every explorer

New Zealand is so remote from the rest of civilisation that it was almost the last significant landmass to be colonised. The earliest settlers were Polynesian explorers in the 13th century. They came from the islands around Tahiti, 4000km

away, sailing large 60-person canoes, possibly in several waves of exploration. They brought with them the Polynesian rat, or kiore, which they bred for food. And since the kiore doesn't swim well, we know it can't have reached New Zealand without hitching a ride aboard human ships. Archaeological excavations of early human settlements have found seed husks showing distinctive kiore gnaw marks, and radiocarbon dating of these husks shows that there were no humans living in New Zealand before 1280.

These early colonists became the Maori people, with a similar language to other Polynesians, but with their own distinct culture. In the 19th century it was popular in Europe to suggest that the Maori may have displaced a much older civilisation called the Moriori. These more primitive people were supposed to have died out in the face of competition from the Maori, apart from a tiny remnant that survived on the Chatham islands to the east. We now know that it was actually the other way around. The Moriori were originally Maori explorers from New Zealand

that colonised the Chatham islands around 1500. They became culturally isolated from the New Zealand Maori, and didn't start calling themselves Moriori until the 1830s when they met Maori travelling on European sailing ships.

By the 1560s, Spanish and Portuguese sailing ships were regularly sailing back and forth across the Pacific Ocean but European maps south of Indonesia were still largely blank. It wasn't until 1642 that the Dutch merchant and seafarer Abel Tasman made the first recorded discovery of New Zealand. Tasman had been sent by the Dutch East India Company to chart a totally unknown place called Beach, which was believed to be on the northern coast of the long-sought continent of Terra Australis (southern land). He didn't find this place, because it didn't exist, at least not in the location suggested by the maps of the

day - these dangled promises of a vast unexplored continent at the edge of the south Pacific. The trouble was that all of these maps were based on a blind acceptance of Marco Polo's account of his travels 300 years earlier, which we now know contains several mistakes. But, like almost every undiscovered land before it, Terra Australis was supposed to be full of gold, and the Dutch East India Company was keen to find it first.

For Tasman, this wasn't as simple as just sailing due south until he hit land. Tasman set out from the Dutch port of Batavia (now Jakarta, Indonesia) but in order to take advantage of the prevailing

Abel Tasman
originally named
New Zealand Staten
Landt, believing it was
part of Staten Island
off the coast of
Argentina

Voyages to New Zealand

James Cook comes ashore
at Queen Charlotte Sound in
1777, with HMS Resolution and
Discovery anchored in the bay



Age of Discovery

winds, he sailed east-southeast almost the whole way across the Indian Ocean to Mauritius, then doubled back and headed west-southwest. On 24 November 1642 he discovered the west coast of Tasmania, after travelling 14,000km in order to make just 4000km progress southward. Tasmania is now named after Abel Tasman, but he originally called it Van Diemen's Land, in honour of Antonie van Diemen, who was one of the sponsors of his voyage. After sailing round the southern coast, Tasman tried to head north, but bad weather forced him east instead. This meant he became the first European to discover New Zealand when he reached the northwest coast of South Island a few days later. Tasman sailed north around the coast for five days and then sent two ship's boats to gather drinking water. Before they reached the shore, they were attacked by Maori in a large canoe, and four of his men were killed. As Tasman tried to sail away they were attacked by another eleven canoes. He fired on them using a cannon loaded with a canister shot and may have killed one Maori. Tasman named that bay Murderer's Bay (since renamed to Golden Bay) and never returned to New Zealand. When he got back to Batavia on 15 June 1643, the Dutch East India Company was disappointed that he hadn't explored the area more thoroughly. He was the first European to have sailed south of 27 degrees latitude in the Pacific. But neither Tasman nor his crew had set foot on New Zealand's soil, and his contribution to its geography was just a ragged line on a map, with nothing to indicate whether it belonged to an island or some larger continent. The Dutch saw nothing there to justify another expedition to explore it further and it would be 125 years before the next ship reached New Zealand's shores.

The captain of that ship was James Cook, a 39-year-old Royal Naval officer, newly promoted to lieutenant so that he had enough rank to command his ship, the Endeavour. His primary mission was to observe the transit of Venus across the Sun, which would be visible from Tahiti on 13 April 1769. Once this scientific measurement was complete, he opened a second set of sealed orders that gave him a new mission to sail down as far as 40 degrees south, in search of Terra Australis. This mission was secret because Britain hoped to claim the golden continent for herself and didn't want to attract the attention of other nations until her flag was firmly planted on this new country. Cook's instructions stated that if he didn't hit land by the time he reached 40 degrees south, he should turn west and sail along a corridor between 35 and 40 degrees south, until he hit the coastline previously discovered by Abel Tasman. Cook himself doubted that an undiscovered southern continent was there to be found, but he was keen to be able to prove this conclusively to his superiors, so he dutifully followed his instructions. On 6 October 1769 Nicholas Young, the surgeon's boy, sighted the northwest coast of New Zealand from the crow's nest of the ship. The Endeavour anchored in Poverty Bay, and Cook named the headland Young Nick's Head, in honour of the boy.

The Endeavour spent the next six months patiently surveying the entire coast of New Zealand. Cook was an accomplished mapmaker and very thorough. He proved that the country was not connected to a larger continent and found the strait between the two islands (now named after him), which Abel Tasman had missed.



Tasman's ship's artist drew this impression of the reception he met from the Maori at Murderer's Bay

Accurate surveying was a dangerous activity because it required the ship to sail as close as possible to an unknown shore. At night the ship had to remain in exactly the same spot so that it could continue the next day, and if there was nowhere suitable to drop anchor, the crew would have to hold position against the tide and the weather. Cook's maps of New Zealand hold up extremely well even today with

just two major errors. Banks Peninsula, near Christchurch, is shown as an island on his original chart and Cook also thought that Stewart Island to the south, was actually connected to the mainland.

Cook's approach to the native Maori was to establish friendly relations wherever

possible. He was one of the first seafarers to appreciate that fresh fruit and vegetables

were essential to prevent scurvy,

and he stopped wherever possible to reprovision his ship. But the Maori did not always welcome the arrival of the Endeavour. When he first came ashore at Poverty Bay, four Maori attacked the sailors left behind on the beach to guard the boats. The coxswain of the Endeavour shot and killed one of the Maori. The next day Cook came ashore again and presented gifts to smooth things over, aided by an interpreter from Tahiti. But, abruptly, a Maori grabbed a cutlass from one of the sailors and was shot. Cook hatched a plan to convince the natives that he was friendly by capturing a group of Maori at sea in their canoe, but then offering them gifts and setting them free. This unlikely scheme turned sour when his ship's boat was spotted approaching the canoe and the Maori promptly attacked. Three or four Maori were shot and killed or

James Cook named some of New Zealand's coastal landmarks. Mt Cook and Cook Strait are named after him

Endeavour was a relatively small ship for such a long journey - just 32m long with a crew of 94



Image source: Wiki



Image source: Wiki



Image source: Wiki

Maori fishermen attempted to kidnap one of Cook's crew here. It is still known as Cape Kidnappers

“Cook’s approach to the native Maori was to establish friendly relations wherever possible”

wounded in the ensuing fracas, and three others taken prisoner. They were treated well aboard the Endeavour and released the next day, but as a diplomatic tactic, it does not appear to have bought Cook any favours. On another occasion, a fishing canoe with 20 Maori approached the Endeavour. Using his Tahitian interpreter, Cook began trading for fish but when the interpreter's servant boy climbed down to the canoe to take the fish, he was kidnapped and the Maori paddled off at speed. Cook's men opened fire, killing two Maori and wounding a third. The young boy dived overboard in the confusion and was rescued by the Endeavour. Cook named the steep white cliffs of the nearby headland Cape Kidnappers to commemorate the incident.

Once the coast of New Zealand was mapped, Cook sailed up the east coast of Australia, which was also uncharted at the time, and returned to Britain via the Cape of Good Hope (South Africa). Nicholas Young, who had been the first to sight New Zealand was again the first to see land as the Endeavour arrived back in England on 10 July 1771, after almost three years at sea. British newspapers had already run stories months earlier that the Endeavour had been lost due to storms or sunk by French warships, so his arrival caused quite a stir. Cook became a celebrity, but his journals were rewritten by an ambitious ghost writer called John Hawkesworth, who had combined the accounts of Cook and Joseph Banks, the expedition's botanist, and also made up a lot

Endeavour's stores included 10,000 cuts of meat, nine tonnes of bread and three tonnes of sauerkraut

of salacious details of his own. The journals were widely criticised by the press as sensationalist and inaccurate, but Cook himself didn't have a chance to read this version as he had already put to sea again by the time that it was published.

Cook wasn't the only mariner who was sailing around New Zealand at the time. Jean-François-Marie de Surville was captain of the French-Indian merchant ship St Jean Baptiste. We know from his journal that on 13 December 1769 he was looking for a safe place to anchor, away from the strong gales blowing him off course. He sailed within nine miles of the Endeavour, in broad daylight, but amazingly, neither ship spotted the other. Another Frenchman, Marc-Joseph Marion du Fresne stumbled upon New Zealand in March 1772, without realising that Cook had already discovered it three years previously. His initial

encounter with the local Maori went much better than Cook's had. The French were invited to sleep at the Maori village, and they spent several weeks learning the Maori language and customs. But relations appear to have deteriorated, possibly because the Maori became interested in acquiring French firearms. This culminated in du Fresne being killed and eaten, along with 26 of his crew. The remaining crew, who were camped on land were besieged over several days by a Maori army that eventually numbered around 1,500 warriors. The tiny French force of 26 nevertheless had vastly superior weapons and killed 250 Maori, including at least five chiefs in a pitched battle,

Cook's interpreter priest

When Cook reached Tahiti, during his first voyage in April 1769, he met a Polynesian priest called Tupaia. This man was a member of a secret religious order called the Arioi, who worshipped the war god Oro. Tupaia was highly intelligent and charismatic, and had installed himself as the political adviser of one of the highest chiefs on the island and the lover of the chief's wife. Tupaia had previously met Europeans when Captain Samuel Wallis of HMS Dolphin stopped in Tahiti in 1767, and spoke some English. He joined the Endeavour for its expedition to New Zealand, partly to escape political enemies at home. When Cook asked him about the geography of the area, Tupaia was able to draw a map showing 130 islands in a 3200km radius of Tahiti. Their positions were part of an oral tradition maintained by the priesthood. Tupaia was invaluable as an interpreter for the Maori. Cook described him as "a Shrewd, Sensible, Ingenious Man, but proud and obstinate". He died in December 1770 from dysentery or malaria contracted when the Endeavour stopped in Batavia.



Image source: Wiki

Tupaia was also an artist and painted this scene of Endeavour's botanist, Joseph Banks, bartering for a lobster

as well as making several other revenge attacks over the next month before they finally sailed back to France.

The account of du Fresne's fate would eventually cloud the European hope of New Zealand as a tempting prospect for colonisation. But in 1772 the survivors hadn't yet returned, and meanwhile James Cook had been promoted to Commander and was outfitting a second expedition to find Terra Australis. This time he planned to use New Zealand as a base to operate from. Queen Charlotte Sound provided a sheltered harbour on the northeast coast of South Island, facing into the Cook Strait that separated the two islands. For this voyage, Cook sailed in the Resolution, together with a companion ship, HMS Adventure, captained by Tobias Furneaux. The ships set off on 13 July 1772 and sailed down to the Cape of Good Hope and then ventured south, reaching the Antarctic Circle on 17 January 1773. Even in the middle of the Antarctic summer, they couldn't sail any further south due to the pack ice, and on 8 February the Resolution and Adventure became separated in thick fog. Cook and Furneaux had anticipated this and arranged that they would rendezvous at Queen Charlotte Sound. The two ships met up there in May and then sailed north to Tonga to resupply. On their way back south for their next attempt to penetrate the Antarctic Circle however, Adventure and Resolution became separated again, this time by a storm. Adventure arrived at Queen Charlotte Sound on 30 November 1773 but Cook had already given up waiting and had ordered the Resolution southward four days earlier. As Captain Furneaux waited in vain for Cook, his supplies began to run low. On 17 December,

he sent a party ashore to gather vegetables, but by nightfall they had not returned. The next day Furneaux sent a party of armed marines to investigate and they found the ship's boat abandoned, and nearby about twenty baskets tied up. These contained roasted meat, still warm

from the fire, and near them were discarded shoes belonging to the missing crew. When the marines rowed round to the next cove, they found hundreds of Maori gathered, together with a great pile of human body parts and entrails being picked over by dogs. The tattoos and identifying scars on some of the severed hands and feet left no doubt that they belonged to their unfortunate crew members.

Lieutenant James Burney, who was in charge of the marines, wrote in his journal that he felt this had not been a premeditated murder, but was probably a quarrel that had got out of hand. The subsequent cannibalism was probably part of a

James Cook circumnavigated the globe on his first voyage without losing a single crew member to scurvy



Image source: Wiki

COOK'S THIRD VOYAGE, 1776-79

By his third voyage, Queen Charlotte Sound had become a routine waypoint. Cook spent two weeks there, on his way north to look for the Northwest Passage.

Cook's goat was the first animal to travel around the world twice and it was awarded a silver collar

ABEL TASMAN, 1642

Tasman was the first European to reach New Zealand but he didn't land there and only stayed long enough to chart short sections of the west coasts of the main islands.

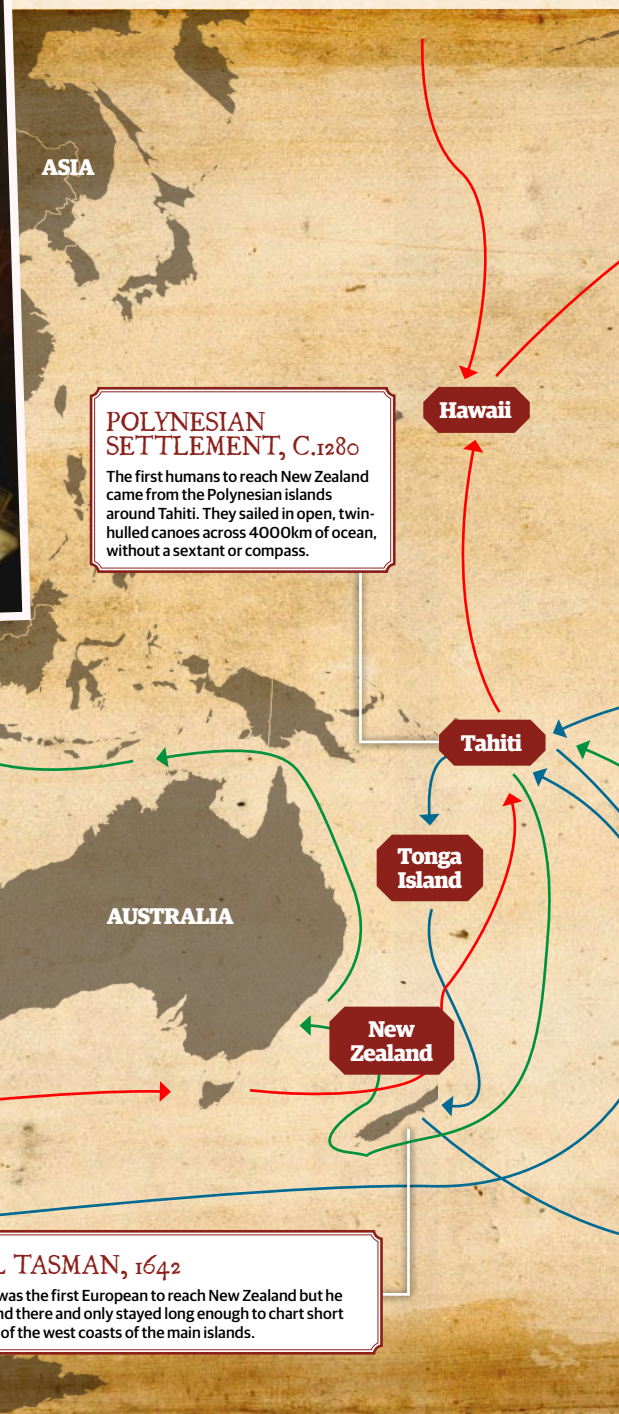
ANTARCTICA

'whangai hau' ceremony, which the Maori believed allowed them to consume the spirit of an enemy and his ancestors.

Captain Furneaux sailed home for England shortly after this incident while Cook remained to explore the Antarctic and South Pacific for another year, so he didn't learn of this grisly event until much later. Cook's third and final voyage was in search of the Northwest Passage between the Pacific and Atlantic through the islands off the north coast of Canada. But he again sailed via New Zealand and used Queen Charlotte Sound as a stopping point on 12 February 1777. The Maori there were quite

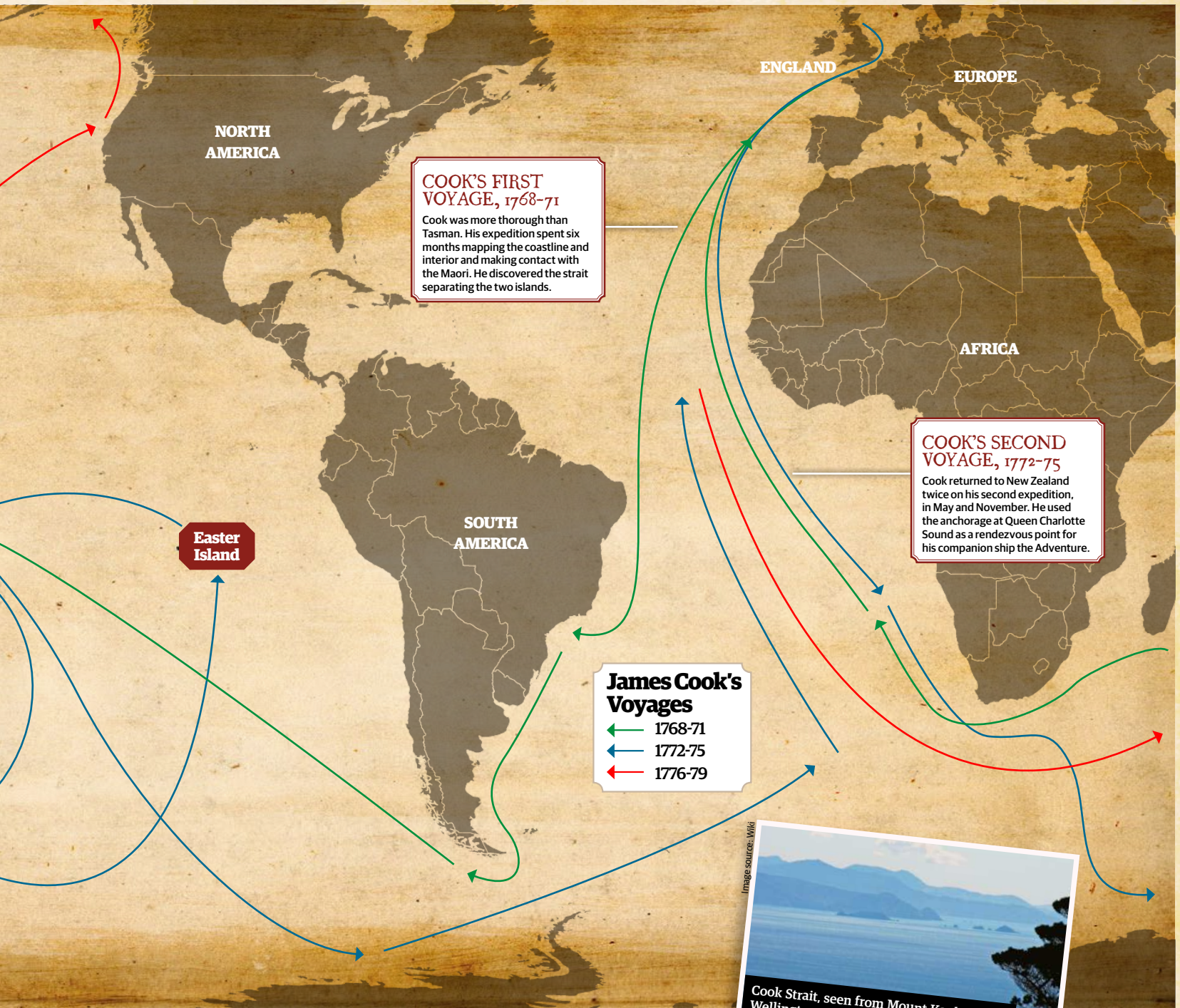
apprehensive when they recognised Cook because they feared he would take revenge for the deaths of Furneaux's crew. Despite the urgings of his own men to order such an action however, Cook refused and instead invited the Maori chief, called Kahura, to have dinner with him in his cabin.

James Cook's calm resolve in the face of such frightening provocation was just one of the qualities that made him such an effective explorer. His contribution to the understanding of this distant and strange new land was unparalleled and his voyages laid the foundation for the new disciplines of ethnology and anthropology.



POLYNESIAN SETTLEMENT, C.1280

The first humans to reach New Zealand came from the Polynesian islands around Tahiti. They sailed in open, twin-hulled canoes across 4000km of ocean, without a sextant or compass.



COOK'S FIRST VOYAGE, 1768-71

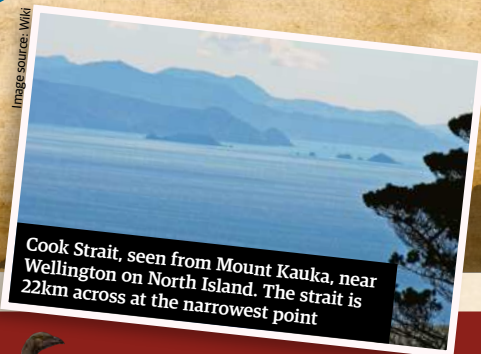
Cook was more thorough than Tasman. His expedition spent six months mapping the coastline and interior and making contact with the Maori. He discovered the strait separating the two islands.

COOK'S SECOND VOYAGE, 1772-75

Cook returned to New Zealand twice on his second expedition, in May and November. He used the anchorage at Queen Charlotte Sound as a rendezvous point for his companion ship the Adventure.

James Cook's Voyages

- ← 1768-71
- ← 1772-75
- ← 1776-79



New Zealand's unique wildlife



Tuatara

The tuatara is not strictly speaking a lizard, but a separate reptile order that evolved 200 million years ago. They are endangered and found only on island nature reserves.



Southern kauri

This conifer provides the largest volume of timber of any tree species. It has remained almost unchanged for 190 million years and kauri forests are among the world's most ancient.



Moa

Nine species of these giant flightless birds lived in New Zealand until they were hunted to extinction by the Maori. The largest were twice as tall as a human.



Giant weta

Lack of mammal predators allowed these grasshopper-like insects to evolve to huge sizes. The largest weta ever found had a 10cm body and was heavier than a sparrow!



Hero or villain?

Captain James Cook

The explorer who made waves throughout the world on his voyages across uncharted oceans

— Written by Jamie Frier —



Captain James Cook stands alongside Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Francis Drake as one of Britain's most renowned sailors and explorers. His three voyages abroad resulted in the discovery of New Zealand, Tahiti, Hawaii and the east coast of Australia, which helped Britain expand its global empire and learn much about these far-flung lands.

Born in Marton, Yorkshire, in 1728, Cook began his working life as an assistant shopkeeper, but quickly realised that he was destined for a career at sea. He became an apprentice master mariner by the age of 18, before earning the rank of mate on the ship *Friendship* six years later. He turned down the opportunity to join a merchant ship in 1755, choosing instead to enrol in the Royal Navy. Within two years he had risen to the rank of master of the *Pembroke*, a 64-gun ship headed for

Canada to fight against the French in the Seven Years' War.

It was here that he first made his name in naval circles by charting the Saint Lawrence river. He learned his craft under surveyor Samuel Holland, who taught him how to use the charting tools and draw maps, before striking out on his own and mapping Gaspé Bay. He then mapped the key battleground of the Saint Lawrence river.

He spent months working under cover of darkness to avoid detection by French forces, eventually creating the map of the river. This enabled the British to sail down the river and capture Quebec, which was a major turning point in the war. Cook was heralded as master surveyor and spent the next eight years mapping out the east coast of Canada. His contribution to the war effort was recognised, and this success, along with his studies of mathematics and astronomy, earned him the commandship of the *Endeavour*.



Cook and his men
saw the Tahitians
dyeing their skin,
starting the tradition
of sailors tattooing
themselves

Cook was a pioneer of the sailing world, claiming lands for Britain and helping eradicate scurvy from his ships, although his treatment of the Hawaiians eventually led to his death

Enemies



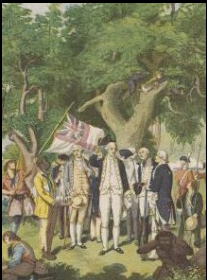
Hawaiian natives

Although the Hawaiians treated Cook as a god when he arrived on the island, his relationship with the natives soured quite quickly. This culminated in Cook being fatally wounded when he arrested a Hawaiian king following the theft of one of his boats.



Joseph Banks

The famed botanist travelled with Cook and collected plants on the captain's first trip to Tahiti, New Zealand and Australia. However, he didn't join the second journey after he and Cook had a falling out; all because the captain didn't allow Banks to have an extra deck on the ship.



Aborigines

The natives of Australia did not appreciate Cook and his crew's arrival on their lands. It was reported that as the fleet arrived in Botany Bay, the Aborigines threw their spears at the ships. Cook's time in Australia was marred by distrust and aggression from both sides.



While in Tahiti, Cook witnessed the practice of human sacrifice



Two of Captain Cook's expedition ships - Resolution and Adventure - in Matavai Bay, Tahiti

Astronomers knew that Venus was set to cross over the Sun in June 1769, but it was only going to be visible from the Southern Hemisphere. The British government decided it would be valuable for this to be observed, so put together a crew led by Cook. The observation was the primary goal of the voyage, although there was also a keen interest in exploring the rumoured Southern Continent. Also on board the ship were the astronomer Dr Charles Green and botanist Joseph Banks, who were tasked with observing the transit of Venus and collecting exotic plants respectively.

Cook set out from Plymouth in August 1768 and landed in Tahiti, the largest island in French Polynesia in the South Pacific. He was able to observe the Transit of Venus across the Sun to achieve his primary mission, and then pushed further west to New Zealand. He circumnavigated the island before becoming the first European to reach the east coast of Australia in 1770.

While Cook had been greeted warmly by the Tahitians, the Aborigines of Australia were not so happy to see the crew,

“He gained a reputation as a responsible and caring ship commander”

attacking the Endeavour with spears. The ship's greater firepower proved decisive, however, and Cook came ashore at Botany Bay, claiming the land for Britain and naming it New South Wales. After further exploration, Cook and his crew triumphantly returned home to Britain after almost exactly three years away.

Only a year later Cook was off again, this time with the ships Resolution and Adventure, attempting to discover more of Australia.

In January 1773, he crossed over the Antarctic Circle, where the bitter temperatures were too cold and they were forced to turn back. However, they did manage to return to New Zealand and Tahiti as well as discover Easter Island and Tonga, and confirm that a giant southern super-continent didn't in fact exist.

Cook's third and final voyage saw him return to North America as he searched once again for a mythical site. This time he was looking

for the North-West Passage, a much-discussed route through North America that linked the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Once again Cook sailed via Australia, New Zealand and Tahiti before travelling up the western coast of North America. On their way they sighted Hawaii, but didn't stop off. The two ships continued their journey towards Alaska and through the Bering Strait, but were barred from going any further by thick Arctic ice.

They headed back to Hawaii in January 1778, where they were greeted with complete reverence. By a stroke of luck, Cook and his men arrived on Hawaii as the islanders were celebrating a festival based around the legend of the sea god Lono. The natives believed Cook to be a god and the sailors were looked after extremely well. They attempted to leave the island in February, but had to return swiftly because of damage to Resolution. When the time came for them to leave again, a dispute broke out over a boat stolen from one of the ships. Cook tried to kidnap a local leader as a hostage for negotiation, leading to a skirmish in which Cook was fatally stabbed on 14 February 1778 at Kealahou Bay. He was buried at sea and

Cook has no direct descendants as his six children died without having children of their own

Cook and four other sailors were killed by the natives after a dispute



Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

the crew returned home to confirm the non-existence of the North-West Passage and announce the unfortunate death of one of the country's greatest sailors and explorers.

Despite his biggest claim to fame being his discovery of many of the islands in the South Pacific, Cook also made a much more important contribution to naval history. One of the biggest killers on long voyages was scurvy, a deficiency of vitamin C. Symptoms included fatigue, swollen and painful gums, jaundice, and eventual death.

Little was known about how to prevent this disease, but Cook took on advice from physicians and insisted that the ship was kept as clean as possible and the men ate as many fresh fruits and vegetables as they could. These rules resulted in his initial journey becoming the first long voyage to report no deaths from the disease. It is often said that Cook's progression through the naval ranks made him much more sympathetic to the needs and

Despite never holding the rank of captain, he was charge of a ship so may be described as such

feelings of his crew, so this may be part of the reason he took such a strong stance on creating the best possible conditions for his sailors. While Cook cannot be credited with the discovery of the prevention, he can certainly be commended for ruthlessly enforcing it and saving untold numbers of lives at sea.

Although conditions on board Cook's ships were clearly better than most and he gained a reputation as a responsible and caring ship commander, he was prone to violent outbursts of temper. His men suffered increasingly at the hands of these ferocious episodes and many believe that it was one such bout of fury that led to his eventual stabbing and death.

Cook's other major mark on naval history is in the field of navigation. John Harrison, an English clock maker, had designed a device for measuring a ship's longitude while at sea, something that had previously been nigh-on impossible. Cook tested it out on the Endeavour and confirmed that

Allies



Captain Charles Clerke

Cook's trusted deputy, Clerke accompanied him on his three historic voyages. Upon Cook's death in Hawaii, Clerke took charge of *Discovery* and *Resolution* but died of consumption before the ships made it back to Britain.



Cook's crew

Scurvy was a constant danger on long journeys at sea until Cook came along. He took the health of his crew very seriously and his insistence on cleanliness on board the ship and the eating of fresh vegetables saved many of his crew from the fatal illness.



John Harrison

The clock maker thought he had solved the problem of measuring longitude at sea, but his invention needed to be tested. Cook was the man for the job and did so, proving that Harrison's invention worked, aiding generations of sailors in navigating the world.

Image source: Wiki / Public Domain

Harrison's machine worked. This was a historic landmark in navigating the oceans and assisted Cook and future sailors greatly as they explored further afield.

Cook is certainly a British and naval hero, combining technical excellence with a thirst for knowledge and discovery. His long sorties abroad never failed to return some new kind of information, whether the discovery of new lands or the confirmation that none such existed. His quick progression through the ranks of the Navy showed him to be a masterful sailor and the fact that he spent ten years at sea exploring previously uncharted waters is a testament to that skill. He can certainly be accused of a lack of cultural sensitivity toward the natives of the lands he visited, but that doesn't seem to be far removed from the general attitudes of the day.

During his 11 years as the driving force of British naval missions abroad, Captain James Cook blazed a trail across the oceans. He left in his wake discoveries of new lands, vast improvements in the health of sailors and the implementation of new navigation technology. As well as being a pioneer in his field, he was brave, intelligent and always willing to seek out new adventures, traits that have well and truly secured his place in the pantheon of the world's greatest explorers.

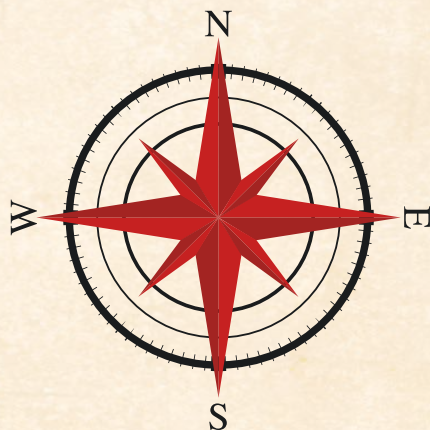
Image source: Alamy, Getty





LEGACY

The Age of Discovery — and indeed Empire — may be over, but the impact can still be felt across the world today. From slavery to skin-bleaching products, examine the adverse effects of European exploration



Shipping human cargo

Transatlantic Slavery

Uncover the little-known genesis of history's darkest trade

— Written by Scott Reeves —



hen Francisco de Rosa looked out on the New World from the deck of the *Santa Maria de la Luz*, the mariner was satisfied with a job well done. Setting out from Arguim, a tiny island off the coast of what is now Mauritania in West Africa, de Rosa had crossed the Atlantic and made it safely to Puerto Rico with a valuable cargo. Among the goods he carried to sell on the other side of the Atlantic were at least 54 African slaves.

De Rosa's voyage in 1520 was the second known to have been undertaken by a slave ship that sailed direct from Africa to the Americas; he may also have commanded the first slave crossing a year earlier, in which at least 60 slaves were transported. They were among the first voyages in a horrific trade in human beings. By the time that transatlantic slavery came to an end 400 years later, around 11 million Africans had been forcibly shipped across the ocean. This is the story of the transatlantic slave trade's murky beginnings.

Despite its relative proximity, the African continent beyond the Mediterranean coast was little known to Europeans at the turn of the

15th century. Only when Castilian and Portuguese seafarers began to understand the regular patterns of the Atlantic's currents and winds could they begin to explore to the south in small but manoeuvrable caravels. Castilians began the conquest of the Canary Islands in 1402; Portuguese explorers discovered the uninhabited islands of Madeira in 1419, the Azores in 1427 and Cape Verde in 1456.

The new islands had a climate and fertile soil that were perfect for the production of wine and sugar, and were soon settled by pioneering colonists. However, the hard, manual graft required to carve a living on the islands was reserved for others. Although the native Canary Islanders, the Guanches, were an ideal source of labour, it was a limited pool of workers. Fortunately for the settlers, an alternative source of labour was soon found. In addition to mapping the waters of the east Atlantic, navigators moved down the coast of Africa, pushing beyond the previously known limit of Cape Bojador to reach Cape Blanco in 1441, the Bay of Arguim in 1443 and Cap-Vert in 1444. There they stumbled across a centuries-old trade network in which West



The Origins of Transatlantic Slavery



The transatlantic slave trade was born when European explorers found a use for African labour on the other side of the ocean

Image source: Alamy

Africa's other slave trade

Slavery was already endemic in African societies when European explorers first came down the west coast. Slaves may have been punished for a crime or debt or were members of a rival tribe who had been captured in war or kidnapped by a raiding party. However, African slaves may have held a different status to those who were unfortunate enough to be chattel slaves on the other side of the Atlantic - they may have had some rights, like owning property and holding public office. When Islam began to spread into Africa in the 7th century, Muslim traders began to range south in search of new markets and partners. Pioneers discovered routes through the Sahara Desert that passed life-preserving oases, often concluding their journeys at Sijilmasa or Kairouan in modern Morocco and Tunisia. Thousands of slaves were taken across the desert each year for use as workers, domestic servants and concubines in North Africa and the wider Islamic world.



Arab slave traders bought and transported African slaves for centuries before the European arrival

African states sold slaves to Arab merchants who transported them across the Sahara to North Africa.

The profits of the trans-Saharan slave trade meant that the West Africa that the Europeans discovered was extremely affluent. By the 14th century the Mali Empire had grown larger than Western Europe. When its leader Mansa Musa visited Cairo on his hajj pilgrimage in 1324, his procession reportedly included 60,000 men, of whom 12,000 were slaves carrying gold bars to pay his way. So vast was his fortune that Musa's party inadvertently caused inflation as prices rocketed in response, devaluing gold for more than a decade after his visit. Emperor Askia the Great of the Songhai Empire completed a similarly opulent hajj more than a century later, while the Kingdom of Kongo was an affluent trading state of

half a million people with an impressive capital at M'banza-Kongo.

It was tales of such prosperity and gold that drew European explorers to the African coast like moths to a light, eager to trade with the rich rulers. In 1445 the Portuguese established a trading post on a small island in a sheltered bay just off the coast of modern Mauritania. Arguim gave the merchants a base from which they could acquire gold and other commodities, including slaves, who could fetch a decent price in Europe or the island colonies of the east Atlantic. By 1455 up to 800 slaves a year were being transported from Arguim to Portugal; by the turn of the century some 81,000 slaves had been transported from the African coast on Portuguese ships and as much as ten per cent of the population of Lisbon may have been African or of African descent.

The use of Africans as labour in Europe and her colonies provided a steady but small flow of slaves from West African trading ports. However, demand for slaves rocketed after the first explorers returned from the other side of the ocean with tales of vast, unclaimed lands.

When Christopher Columbus discovered Hispaniola - the island containing modern Haiti and the Dominican Republic - in 1492, it was probably home to hundreds of thousands of indigenous inhabitants, the Taíno. However, Spanish colonisation was violent. Any natives who opposed the conquerors were mercilessly cut down, while European diseases for which the Taíno had no immunity cut through the population; the first smallpox epidemic in Hispaniola and Puerto Rico may have claimed the lives of around two-thirds of the native population. Within just 30 years, the number of natives plummeted by around 85 per cent. By 1514, according to a Spanish census, there were only 26,000 Taíno left under Spanish control. The rich gold mines and agricultural fields that the Spanish had discovered in the New World would be useless if there was nobody to work in them.

It was a situation repeated across the Caribbean - millions of native inhabitants of the islands may have died in the first two or three decades of Spanish expansion. With no local workforce, slaves were shipped from the west coast of Africa to Europe, and from there onto the New World. The first African slaves known to have landed in the Americas reached Hispaniola in 1502, while four African slaves are known to have been shipped from Europe to Cuba in 1513. The Spanish had lost one workforce; their solution was to ship another in from the other side of the ocean.

On 18 August 1518, King Charles I of Spain made the new transatlantic slave trade ruthlessly efficient when he issued a new document

SLAVE CENTRES

1. ARGUIM

One of the first European slave trading bases off the coast of Africa, established in 1445.

2. SAO TOME

An island trading base that was a hub for slaves trafficked to the Americas from the Kingdom of Kongo.

3. ELMINA CASTLE

Built in 1482, the slave-holding castle is now the oldest European building south of the Sahara.

4. CANARY ISLANDS

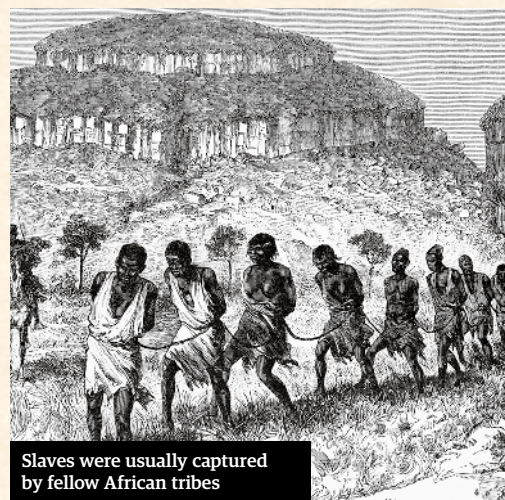
The earliest European demand for African slaves arose from a need for workers in the island colonies of the east Atlantic.

5. HISPANIOLA

The first known African slaves in the Americas arrived in Hispaniola in 1502 after a circuitous passage via Europe.

6. SAN MIGUEL DE GUALDAPE

Founded in 1526 by Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón, the 600 colonists of the first Spanish attempt to colonise the mainland included a number of slaves.



Slaves were usually captured by fellow African tribes

“Demand for slaves rocketed after the first explorers returned from the other side of the ocean with tales of unclaimed lands”

The Origins of Transatlantic Slavery

The transatlantic triangle

The early transatlantic slave trade arose from other, older slave trading networks

Europe

Africa

South America

SLAVE ROUTES

Besides the transatlantic slave triangle, there were also slave routes prior to European colonisation of the Americas, such as the Arab trade across the Sahara

1. TRIANGULAR TRADE BEGINS

The first part of the triangular trade saw European manufactured goods taken to Africa where they could be exchanged for slaves.

2. MIDDLE PASSAGE

The infamous leg of the slave trade, the six to eight week voyage across the Atlantic saw slaves kept in cramped and unsanitary conditions, with much loss of life.

3. CLOSING THE TRIANGLE

The raw materials produced by slaves on plantations - cotton, sugar, rubber and tobacco - were shipped back to Europe's factories.

OTHER ROUTES

1. TRANS-SAHARA 700-1900

Muslim traders used oases in the Sahara Desert to transport slaves from the Wagadou and Mali Empires to the Arab kingdoms in modern Morocco and Tunisia.

2. CRIMEAN KHANATE 700-1900

The Crimean successors of the vast Mongol Empire traded with the Ottoman Empire, supplying them with captured prisoners from eastern Europe and northwest Russia.

3. VARANGIAN VOLGA 800-1100

Vikings who lived in northern Europe enslaved Slavs in their raids along the Volga River and sold them in the south to Byzantine or Muslim buyers.

that authorised the transportation of slaves direct from Africa to the Americas. The charter allowed Lorenzo de Gorrevod, a trusted advisor and member of the king's council of state, to transport "four thousand Negro slaves both male and female" to "the Indies, the islands and the mainland of the ocean sea, already discovered or to be discovered" by ship "direct from the isles of Guinea and other regions from which they are wont to bring the said negros".

The charter was a reward to de Gorrevod for good service, a chance to make a fortune by granting him the first chance to profit from a new trade route, but he had no intention of involving himself directly in human trafficking. The rights granted to him were subcontracted and resold a number of times until they fell into the hands of a Genoese merchant, Domingo de Fornari; two Castilian merchants, Juan de la Torre and Juan Fernandez de Castro, and a Seville-based Genoese banker, Gaspar Centurion. They arranged for various seafarers to carry out the work of transporting 4,000 African slaves

from one side of the Atlantic to the other. At least four voyages took place, in 1519, 1520 - the voyage under the command of Francisco de Rosa - May 1521 and October 1521. Each departed from Arguim and landed in Puerto Rico, although it is likely that other ships carried slaves from Arguim to Hispaniola. There were also at least six slave voyages from Cape Verde to the Caribbean between 1518 and 1530.

By 1522 direct slave voyages had begun from another starting point: the island of São Tomé some 2,000 miles along the African coast, opposite what is now Gabon. Among these voyages was a ship carrying 139 slaves that voyaged across the Atlantic in 1522, and another with as many as 248 in 1529. The first enslaved Africans to reach mainland North America arrived in 1526 as part of an ill-fated Spanish attempt to colonise San Miguel de Gualdape, while African burials at a cemetery in Campeche, Mexico, suggest that African slaves may have been shipped to Central America almost as soon as Hernán Cortés had subjugated the Aztec and Mayan empires.

The transatlantic slave trade was born. From relatively humble beginnings, the number of slaves crossing the ocean would grow and grow. British slave ships would soon eclipse the deeds of their Iberian predecessors, transporting millions of slaves in the 18th century.

The scars of the slave trade still remain today. While slave labour in the colonies helped European powers to become rich, industrial nations, the African population and economy stagnated and fell behind the rest of the world. Ever-increasing European demands meant that slave-trading African rulers needed to have a growing, ready supply of slave labour, triggering raids and wars that unsettled the continent and left a legacy of tribal conflict and civil wars. An African diaspora exists throughout North and South America, but long-held racial prejudices have simmered well beyond the end of the slave trade and into the 21st century, especially in the United States. The ill effects of the 400-year transatlantic slave trade were unintended consequences of the Age of Discovery.



Ruling the world

The Legacy of Colonialism

The Age of Discovery paved the way for European colonisation
– and the world continues to deal with the fallout

Written by Mohammed Barber



Why are European languages the most widely spoken? Why is Christianity so prevalent? And why are so many borders simple straight lines?

The answer, in short, is empires. European imperialism created the modern world. As Europeans traversed the globe seeking trade with the 'Old World', they realised business could be conducted through cannon fire and muskets. It wasn't moral, but it was lucrative. Superior technology coupled with intra-European competition led to the birth of empires, which subjugated most of the world's population under a few Western European countries. Though the formal era of colonialism is over, the modern world is still scarred by it. Through the wars of recent decades, our towering skyscrapers and even the languages we speak, the remnants of colonialism can be seen everywhere. But how did a handful of Western European countries come to dominate the rest of the world?

Adventure and the search for riches – not conquest

– initially motivated the first travellers on their voyages into the 'Old World'. But the relationship was always imbalanced, with Western Europe being the stronger military power, which became painfully apparent when the natives challenged the status quo. In Latin America, the Spanish and Portuguese found the raw materials they needed to power their ambitions in Europe. Eventually, it became simpler to replace the native powers with European vassals, leading to the colonisation of Central and South America.

Likewise, when the British East India Company (EIC) first landed in India in 1608, it was to establish trading relations with

the culturally developed power that accounted for 23% of the world's GDP. At the Battle of Plassey 1757, the EIC took direct control of Bengal after its Nawab refused to be the puppet ruler the Company desired. Over the next century, this private company (with much support from the British government) went from controlling a state to colonising the subcontinent. When the British left in 1947, India only accounted for 4% of the world's GDP.

China also endured an unpleasant experience with the British. With tea becoming ever more popular at home, the British proposed a trade – Indian opium for Chinese tea. Seeing the devastating impact of opium on its population, the Chinese refused. So, the British and its superior navy simply bombed Chinese ports into submission. Thus is the story of the Opium Wars.

European powers were not coy in showing who the power really belonged to in order to "maintain" trading relations. The search for profit brought untold wealth to Western Europe, but also increased competition to sniff out opportunities before their European neighbours. As a result, Western powers soon found themselves administering large swathes of land without intending to. In other words, empire was not, in the beginning,

Below: The prosperity of Western Europe is rooted in the brutality of colonialism



British ships destroying Chinese vessels during the First Opium War



Image source: DeGustini/Getty Images

“To this day, many African-Americans have no idea which part of Africa their heritage stems from”

a calculated strategy by Western powers to take over the world. It simply became so to have more power over their own European neighbours.

The story of European empire begins in the 15th century, when Portugal conquered Ceuta in North Africa. By 16th century, Spain and Portugal had empires in Latin America, mining gold, silver and tin. This is why Latin Americans speak the language of their ex-colonisers, why Americans speak English, and parts of Canada speak French.

Meanwhile, European powers had their eye on Africa, but disease and well-developed city states made colonising it very difficult. So they traded in people instead. The Transatlantic Slave Trade lasted over 300 years, shipping human beings mostly to Brazil and the Caribbean to unpaid, involuntary work on sugar, tobacco and coffee plantations. Slave labour is why these products, once the reserve of the rich, became affordable for Europe's rising middle classes. Many African-Americans have no idea which part of Africa their heritage stems from, because their ancestors were abducted, shipped and sold. The legacy of the slave trade can be seen in bricks and mortar,

too - the US Capitol, White House, Washington Monument, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello and universities such as the University of North Carolina on Chapel Hill were built by slaves.

Perhaps the most harmful legacy of colonialism, one that underpinned the Transatlantic Slave Trade and still affects people today, is racism. Racism operated on many levels, but core to it are the



Image source: xxx

Orientalism: how the West created the East in its image

Orientalism used to refer to the study of Middle Eastern and Asian languages, cultures and history during the Age of Discovery. But the literary critic, Edward Said, argued in his ground-breaking book *Orientalism* (1978) that Orientalism was not just an academic pursuit, but a process that created 'the Orient' (i.e. anywhere outside of Western Europe) in the Western imagination. Everyone from novelists, poets, philosophers, political theorists, economists, travel writers, imperial administrators and academics delineated the East as inherently and intrinsically different to the West, so when one thought about the 'Orient', it evoked a certain set of thoughts and images. Many thought of brutal sultans exacting power over submissive and sensual harems. Others thought of poor snake charmers in dust-blown villages, sat on colourful, bedraggled rugs. Some simply thought of elephants and camels. Either way, it was nothing like the 'civilised' West.

Said critiqued how knowledge about the East was produced by the West in the post-Enlightenment period. This process was crucial, as the West defined itself to be everything the East was not. Consequently, it is within this process of Orientalism that ideas of European superiority, white supremacy and racism were incubated - the pretexts for colonialism. Said's ideas were hotly debated when the book was published and continue to fire debate today. Nevertheless, Orientalism led to the birth of postcolonial studies in history, politics, anthropology and even music.



Image source: Francis Bang/Cover/Getty Images

Paintings such as Giulio Rosati's *Inspecting New Arrivals* proliferated Western ideas about the depravity of the East. Rosati never visited the Middle East



Image source: Wiki

Palestinian American academic and literary critic Edward Said (1935-2003) critiqued how knowledge about the East was - and is - produced by the West

Qwhite Right

The racism of empire is still alive. Today it operates far more surreptitiously, making it harder to spot, for example in modern beauty standards. Throughout the days of empire, being beautiful meant being white. The notion of whiteness extended not just to skin colour, but also thin lips, small features, blond hair and blue eyes. Though the Nazis took these standards to extreme levels, these were still commonly held beliefs across Europe. Even today, millions of people in Africa, Asia and the Middle East bleach their skin to look more attractive. The global skin-bleaching trade is a multi-billion dollar industry, and projected to be worth \$24 billion by 2027, the lion's share of sales in the Asia Pacific region. An estimated 40% of Chinese women have used skin-bleaching products, as have 60% of Indian women and a staggering 77% of Nigerian women. Beauty pageants around the world are overwhelmingly won by light-skinned women, from Brazil to China, who often possess dainty and pointed facial features. The last few decades have seen the rates of rhinoplasty (nose jobs) skyrocket across the Middle East, by both men and women who want a 'European-looking' nose. The assumed primacy of European beauty that has taken hold of the world is a concept rooted in white supremacy.



Skin-bleaching products can contain dangerous levels of hydroquinone and mercury

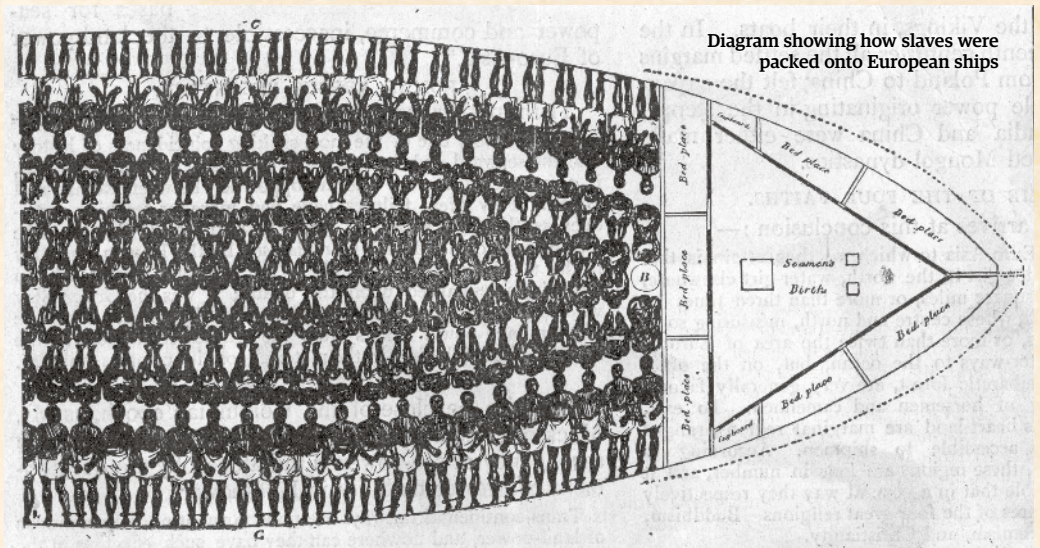


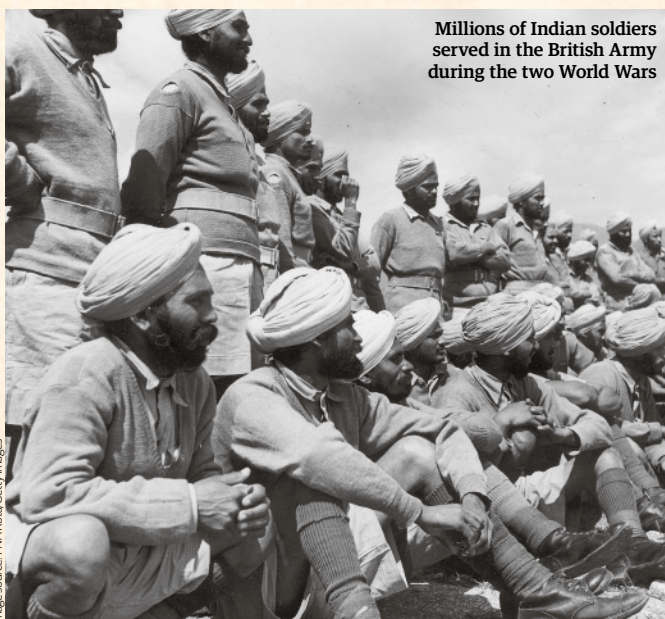
Diagram showing how slaves were packed onto European ships

“Colonisation was justified as a means to an end to help civilise the barbarians”

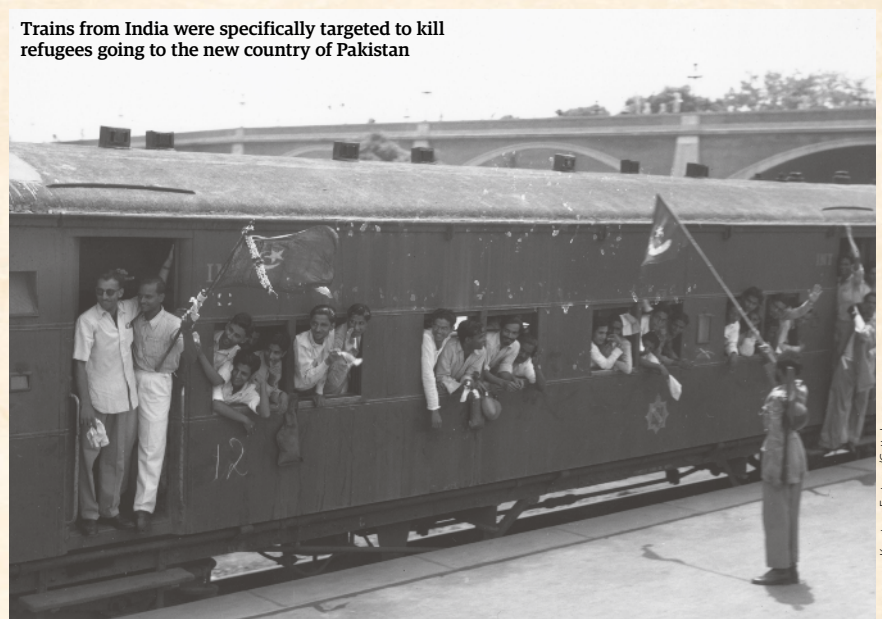
twin notions of European superiority and white supremacy. These beliefs made the colonising of nations and trading of its people ideologically palatable. No good Christian could countenance the brutality of empire, so it needed a justification. Centuries of travelogues, poetry, fiction and academic works had typified non-Western places as intellectually deprived, technologically undeveloped and morally backward. This characterisation was necessary so the West could position itself as superior. Colonisation was justified as a means to an end to civilise the barbarians, to save them from their own selves, in what Rudyard Kipling called “the white man's burden”. As a result, thousands of missionaries went across the world preaching the word of Christ, banishing local customs and installing European modes of morality (and bureaucracy).

Modern borders are another legacy of colonialism that generate conflict across the world. Present-day Nigeria is a colonial creation - the name was coined in a *London Times* article in 1897, and its borders contain hundreds of tribes, who are also found in other nations. It was created as a matter of colonial policy with no unifying language or culture - the national language is English.

After the First World War, the French and British carved the former Ottoman Empire between themselves by drawing perfectly straight lines on a map, splitting ethnic communities into different countries across the Middle East. Palestine was partitioned, leading to an conflict that still rages on. The British partitioned the Indian subcontinent in 1947, turning 15 million people into refugees, and killing between one and two million people in the ensuing conflict. Shockingly, the Partition of

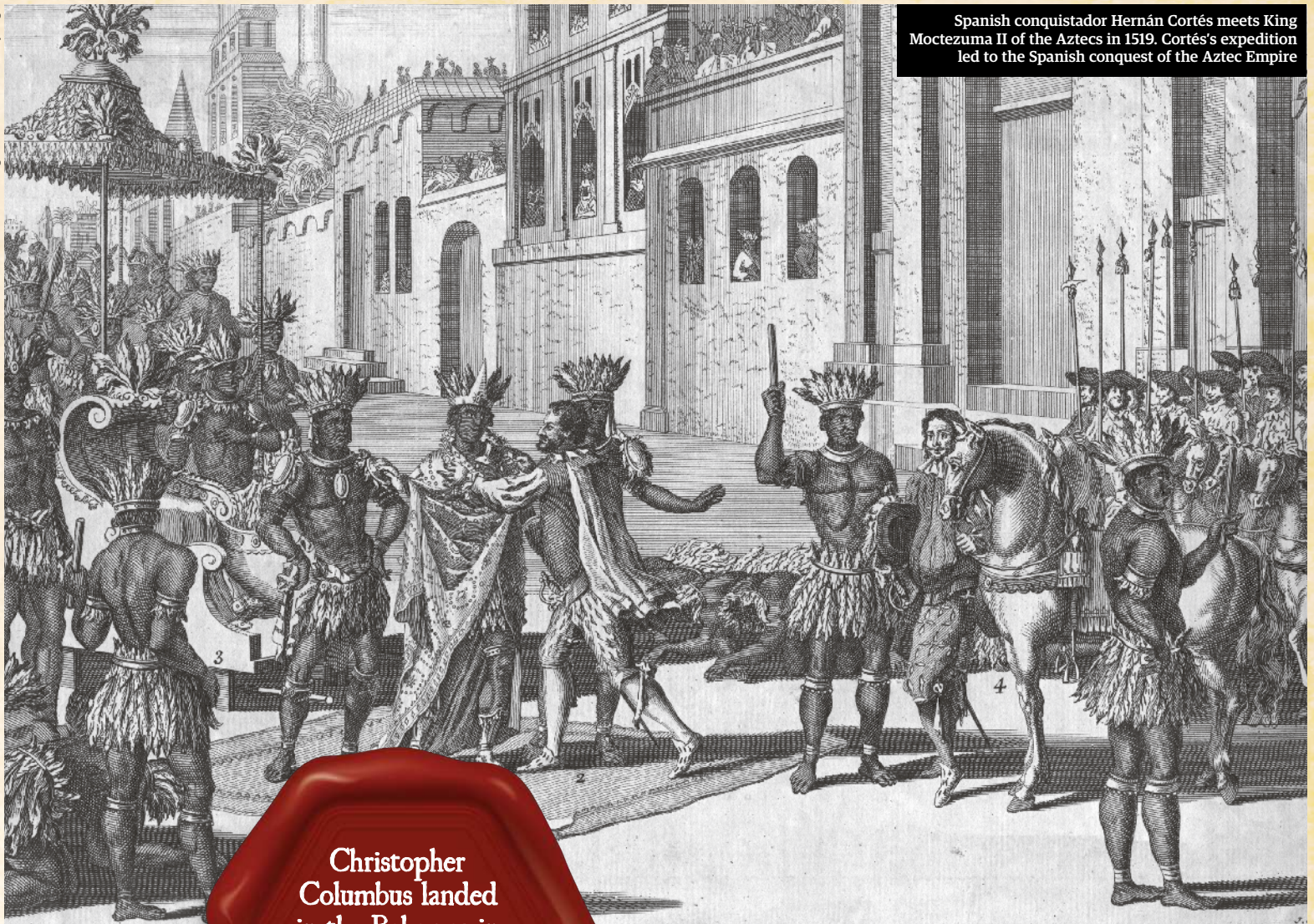


Millions of Indian soldiers served in the British Army during the two World Wars



Trains from India were specifically targeted to kill refugees going to the new country of Pakistan

Imagesource: Hulton Archive/Getty Images



Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés meets King Moctezuma II of the Aztecs in 1519. Cortés's expedition led to the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire

Christopher Columbus landed in the Bahamas in 1492 and started the Spanish Empire

India was conducted in five weeks by a lawyer who'd never before set foot on the subcontinent. Then, in 1971, East Pakistan declared independence and became Bangladesh. Meanwhile, the dispute over Kashmir has seen India and Pakistan fight three major wars. Though it is simplistic to suggest colonially instituted borders are the sole cause, they're central to these conflicts.

Western museums and treasuries are filled with riches plundered from colonies. The colonial taking that generates the most amount of heat is the famous Kohinoor diamond, which once adorned the legendary Peacock Throne of the Mughals in India. Prince Albert had it recut in 1852, drastically reducing its size, and it now resides in the Tower Of London, thousands of miles from its original home.

The exploitation of colonial assets was not limited to rare treasures. When the two World Wars broke out, Britain mobilised its resources across the empire - material and human. Across both wars, millions of Indian soldiers fought on

the front lines. It's telling that there are apparently more memorials to animals that died in the war, than to the non-Western soldiers who laid down their lives for the British Empire. English is a national language in India, which most Indians can speak to some level. However, studies have shown that Indians who are fluent in English earn 34% more than their peers who are not. Fluency in English is frequently a marker of education and social status.

Western Europe became prosperous because it drained prosperity from the rest of the world. Whereas China, Brazil and India are now catching up to their European colonisers, places like Sub-Saharan Africa are still woefully behind. All these countries are having to deal with the aftermath of colonialism, issues that are complex and deep-rooted. The world map could look very different, had countries not been colonised and left to deal with the consequences. Colonialism is the reason why many Moroccans speak French, and why English is the national language of Nigeria. It's also

why goods such as fruit and sugar are so cheaply produced, why millions see white skin as beautiful and why European museums are filled with rare artefacts from around the world. The list goes on. Though the formal days of empire are gone, its legacy lives on in various guises, blatant or discreet. The embers of empire continue to burn.



Nigerian troops enter Port Harcourt during the civil war after Nigeria's independence from the UK

Imagesource: xxx



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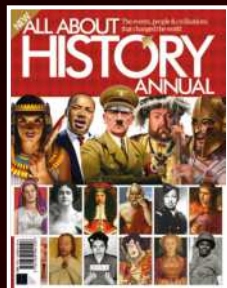
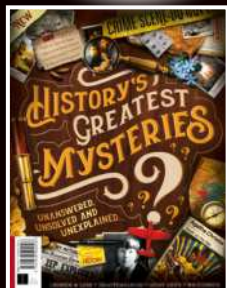
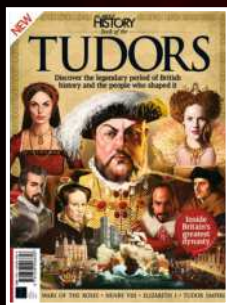


Chart the rise
of Hitler and
learn how he set
Germany on the
path to war



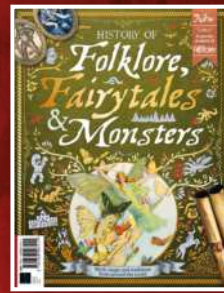
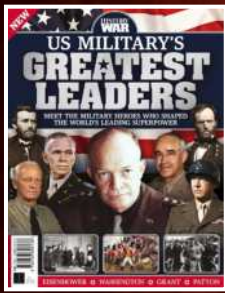
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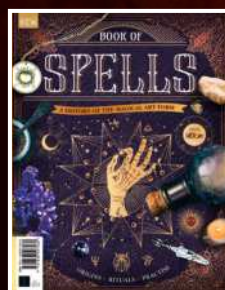
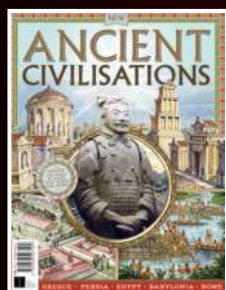
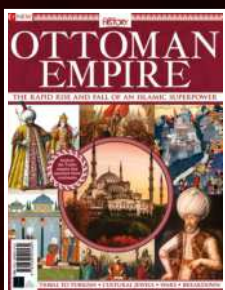
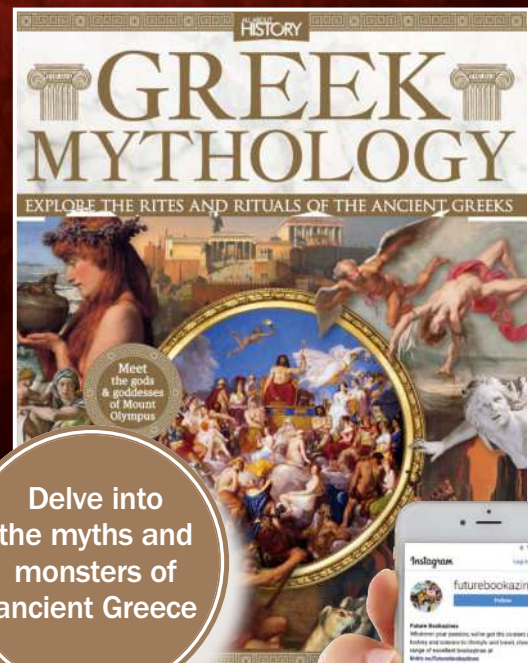
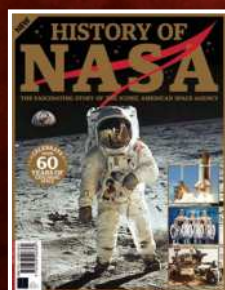


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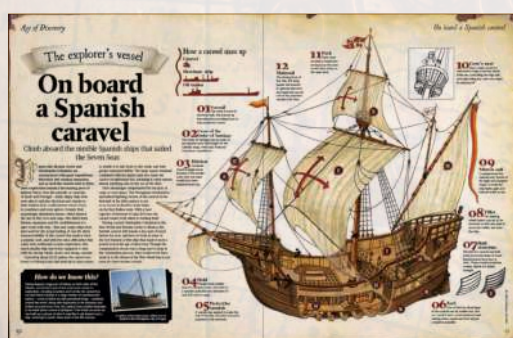




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